

RECIPE FOR A SUCCESSFUL BLACK TIE AWARDS GALA WITH THEME SUGGESTIONS

The following is for a black tie, formal gala with substantial award recipients, silent and live auction, and dancing. Primarily it is designed to be hosted at a large hotel capable of accommodating several hundred guests, however there are suggestions for holding it at other venues. This was developed by the Austin Bar Foundation.

GUIDE TO GETTING STARTED:

This is not for the faint of heart. Your guests have to be willing to show up for an upscale, dressy event and pay significant sums for tickets and auction items. You will need to find underwriting or advertizing for the event to offset the event costs or most of the individual ticket prices will go to the cost of the event and you will not raise significant sums for your foundation. If you are concerned that it will be difficult to continually host a formal event for only fundraising reasons, consider pairing it with significant awards. This not only highlights (and delights) the award recipients, but also encourages supportive guests and firms that are likely to buy ticket, tables, sponsorships and donate auction items. Carefully consider when and how the awards ceremony will be conducted. We recommend that it occur during the seated dinner, with prepared videos introducing the award winners and their good works or biographical information. At the end of the timeline, see the “TIPS” section.

GALA TIMELINE:

Nine to Twelve Months Before

1. Choose a Gala Chair or set a steering committee (see TIPS). The chair and or a steering committee will make initial decisions about theme, location and dates although, by tradition, our President determines the theme and has a strong input on the location. With your executive director, the chair should be the person that has the responsibility to make other periodic decisions about your gala. Once the person or persons are determined, they need to establish the date and a budget for your event.
2. Decide on any fundraising you would like to accompany the gala. (silent auction, raffle, etc.)
 - Silent and live auction
 - Consider hiring a professional auctioneer. They can also help with ideas for the live auction and recommendations for where to seek items.

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- Get auction software, makes life ever-so-much easier
- Have a photographer or Photo Booth. Consider supplying themed hats, masks, etc. for guests to have a picture taken during the happy hour. Photos can be taken and posted after the event on a website for sale.
- Other smaller fund raising done during the happy hour, all of which are “paid” for with the guests’ bid number:
 - (1) Wine pull. Wine donated by board members. At the happy hour, numbered corks are sold for \$10 each or 3 for \$25, colorful bag with bottle collected at table located in the silent auction area.
 - (2) Mystery envelopes sold for \$10, 3 for \$25. Total envelopes #200. In these we put various items too small for a silent auction, coupons from restaurants (2 for 1 or free appetizer), and coupons for free bar association CLE, history book and items we purchased for the decorations, such as pinatas, harps, etc.
 - (3) Flight of tequila, Irish Whiskey, Scotch (again going with the theme) for \$20-25 each.

3. Recruit the following volunteers:

- Auction Chair(s) Arm twist an overachiever to be auction chair. Invite the young lawyer’s association and lawyer’s auxiliary to procure their own silent auction items, the proceeds from those sales go to the group that brings in the item and encourages attendance from those groups.
- Print and Promotions Chair (unless you are fortunate enough to have staff that can fill this role)
- Decoration Chair (unless the Gala chair elects to do this job too).

4. Consider choosing a different theme each year for your gala. Reinforce the theme in “save the date” cards, invitation, band selection, auction items, menu and decorations. Decorate your silent auction area and tables to match.

Suggestions for themes:

- Masked Ball or Masquerade (masks encouraged)
- An Evening at the Fair (as in State Fair, sell chances for prizes with a ring toss for wine, dart throw and other typical carnival games)
- Saturday Night Gala (disco theme)
- Stars Are Out Tonight (awards theme)
- Evening in the Orient
- An Enchanted Evening on the Emerald Isle (Irish castle theme)
- Night under the Stars (in our state the Texas Stars)
- Night in Havana (Big Band and rolled cigars)
- Una Noche in el Mercado (Mexican market theme)

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- British Invasion (Beatles, Who, Stones, Harry Potter, Bond, etc)
We have pictures on the website for decorating ideas.

5. Choose a convenient and well liked location. Set a goal on the numbers of persons that you want to come to the event as this may dictate your location choices. Reserve a date and time at the event location. In the contract, consider asking the hotel to comp several rooms for staff and the President of the association. You may have other requirements that your bands may have, such as rooms and food, make sure those are part of the contract. Don't forget to also ask them for an auction item such as a weekend retreat to their hotel (that you may combine with restaurant gift certificate and an entertainment certificate for a higher priced auction package). Find out if the hotel requires use of their own audiovisual equipment, personnel and the costs, same issue with costs involving hanging anything from the ceiling. Some venues have linens, votives, some table decorations and lighting that are comped, so take that into consideration when budgeting for decorations.

Other considerations are noted at the end under "TIPS."

6. Select and book a well-liked band for entertainment, consider your theme when choosing. Ex. U-2 cover for Irish theme, disco cover band for disco, Beatles cover band for British Invasion, Big Band for Havana, etc.

7. If you are responsible for providing your own audio visual system, invest in renting a good one. Guests may not recognize a higher end system, but they will remember a bad one. Make sure your system works, works well and that your volunteers know how to use it.

Six to Nine Months Before

1. Have committee leaders enlist additional volunteers and assign duties.
2. Select a caterer if not provided by the location venue.
3. Start sending out letters for significant auction items, like airline tickets and vacation home donations.
4. Begin ordering decorations. If rentals are required, reserve these early. Be creative with decorations and look online for ideas and volume discounts for large orders. See what the venue may have that can be used at little to no cost. If you decide to use one, be prepared to spend some possible significant money with a professional decorating service. Although, some things such as specialty linens, centerpieces, draping and lighting might be cheaper through them than buying the items. Often a creative table can be achieved without the cost of expensive floral arrangements, and you can sell or give as prizes what was purchased and is on the table. Put small stand up cards on the table noting the price of the items being sold

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so that they will understand that it is for sale and will not walk off with the decorators' goods.

5. Compile a list of potential event sponsors and begin soliciting them.

6. Set table and ticket prices based on your fundraising goal. Be realistic for your community. Consider selling half tables. Sell whole and half tables for more than individual tickets prices to firms and sections of the association. This generates significant revenue. Consider comping tickets for young lawyers that come to help set up or do significant work in gala preparation.

7. Develop sponsorship packages for your event. Potential sponsor opportunities include:

- Event sponsor
- Table sponsors
- Advertising in the event program (we have chosen not to do this).

Four to Six Months Before

1. Choose the food and beverage menu for your event and decide on a meal style that matches your theme. Require a tasting and several menu and wine choices. Remember to offer a vegetarian plate, or have the venue have several ready as a choice.

2. Evaluate venue floor plans and determine set up. Location of video screens, dance floor and band stage is key.

3. Compile a list of possible attendees/firms. Make sure to request that board members and sections of the bar consider buying tables.

4. Design and personalize "save the date" cards with your theme hype started. Add the date and theme to your web page and calendar.

5. Make final determination of how you will process event registration and auction. If you decide to use software (recommended), contact other bar foundations to hear the pros and cons of any system before purchasing and make sure there is product support from the company. Start working with it and the company if you encounter any problems.

6. Confirm equipment provided by venue and determine any need for supplemental rentals.

7. Develop a publicity strategy.

8. Consider hiring an auctioneer or tapping a charismatic attorney volunteer as MC/auctioneer. Book a professional early.

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9. Determine award recipients and include the names in save the date, sponsorship letters and on invitations. The Austin Bar Association selects 2-3 lawyers for their Distinguished Lawyer Awards and an attorney for a separate community service award. This generates significant participation from the legal community that come to support the recipients. Prepare high quality videos regarding the outstanding attorneys receiving each award with information and interviews from former colleagues and friends.
10. Book any additional vendors needed.
11. Prepare auction item contract/forms for vendor and volunteer use. Put them on your website.
12. Recruit your board into gathering silent auction items. Require each to procure at least one auction item *and* a donation of a bottle of wine for wine pull, baskets or instant wine cellar. Prepare and hand out auction forms to everyone on board, committees, staff and volunteers. Get young lawyers and auxiliary members to participate.

Three Months Before

1. Confirm travel arrangements and requirements for entertainment if applicable.
2. Mail save the date cards.
3. Secure audiovisual equipment for your event if you have determined that your location does not have a system in place and you have to rent your own.
4. Recruit a master of ceremonies to make announcements and presentations at the event.
6. Contract all vendors and make deposits.
7. Evaluate secured sponsors to date and assign sponsor recruitment responsibilities to volunteers or your board.
8. Send out press releases and community announcements.
9. Develop design and draft of event program book.
10. Finalize decor and floor plans. Make sure all orders are placed and decorations will be in on time.
11. Set up a website for payment online for tickets and sponsorships.

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Six to Eight Weeks Before

1. Personalize and mail invitations. Be sure to include acceptable attire on the invitation. Consider including the names of table sponsors and auction items secured to date, place the name of the award recipients on the invitation and if possible, include the tax deduction in either the invitation or return card or both. Make sure the website for payment online for tickets and sponsorships is working.
2. Develop event night schedule.
3. Gather all sponsor logos and names for program ads and insert into program book.
4. Begin gathering promised auction items and gift certificates.

One Month Before

1. Finalize event night schedule.
2. Complete and edit the program book and auction book.
3. Follow up on any promised table sponsors and auction items.
4. Either secure staff of volunteers to transport decorations and auction items to the venue or make plans to rent a van or truck.
5. Final check with vendors.
6. Gather remaining contracts/forms for promised auction items, the items or if the vendors are offering to redeem certificates but are not providing them, create the certificates.

Two Weeks Before

1. Print program books, menu, auction books.
2. Develop seating charts.
3. Get final number of guests to caterer/hotel.
4. Finalize videos for awards and introductions.
5. Review remarks with master of ceremonies and schedule with auctioneer.

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6. Request the names of all table guests before the evening. This allows preparation of the bid numbers in advance. Check-in is quick and they are off to the silent auction/happy hour quicker. In addition, this is a way that we often find that a table will not be full and we ask if we can place other paying individuals to fill those tables. This way we are able to over book and the seats are all filled when looking in the room.
7. Check all auction items against the contracts/forms and finish gathering promised items.
8. Prepare auction bid sheets for silent auction.
9. Prepare baskets and combined auction items.

One Week Before

1. Finalize seating charts.
2. Confirm vendors' and band's arrival times.
3. Review volunteers' arrival times and event day tasks. Have 4-6 people that are attending and well known help with seeing bids at the live auction.
4. Hold event rehearsal if necessary.
5. Prepare remaining vendor payments.
6. Prepare computers to be used and ensure software is working correctly.

Day before Event

1. If you can move the auction items and decorations to a secure location at the hotel the night before, do so.
2. If you can begin to decorate, do so. Even if you cannot get into the space the day before, sometimes the hotels will allow silent auction tables to be decorated and prepared the day before, placed in a holding area and will have hotel personnel move them into the space the day of the event.

Day of the Event

1. Arrive before all vendors to set up and decorate.
2. Take with you: lots of tape, duct tape, scissors, string, pins, pens (enough for each auction

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item and then some), auction sheets, auction items, decorations.

3. Ensure that check-in table is ready and staffed.
4. Prepare check out table.
5. Ask your live auction volunteers to come 15-30 minutes early to meet with the auctioneer.

At the Event sample timeline

1. At check-in give the guest their bid number, drink tickets if you are not doing a fully open bar, and a raffle coupon if you are doing one to get guests in their seats. If the guest is in their seat when the raffle is drawn, they win a significant door prize such as an iPad or one year free membership in the association.
2. 6:30pm, start Happy Hour and silent auction. Happy hour for us is open bar. Have music that goes with the theme, ex. a Mariachi band for a Mexican theme.
3. 7:30pm: doors to the dining room open and the silent auction ends at 7:45pm. It gets people to move into the ballroom, allows our staff to get all the items prepared for check out, and more persons take the items with them at the end of the night than when we left it open until much later. Further, people will not leave the ceremonies to check on their bidding. This allows the items and bills to be prepared by the staff or volunteers so that there is quick check out at the end and few items have to be returned to the office for later pick up by guests.
4. 8:00pm: It is hard to get people to stop mingling and go to dinner. Consider temporarily or permanently closing the bar, a distraction to lead them into the event/ballroom, We have incorporated a gong and a San Francisco style dragon parade to lead the way to the dinner as examples that went with the theme of the event. We offer a significant door prize awarded to the person with the raffle ticket that is seated at the time of the drawing or has the seat with a card under it. Salad may be preset and the welcome and “state of the foundation” speech begins immediately following the raffle drawing. Wine is served with the meal, but the open bar is closed and guests have to pay for alcohol other than wine.
5. 8:15 p.m. lights down and video lead in of discussion of the Foundation accomplishments during the year, events, grants, grantees, fundraising etc. As much as possible on video helps keep the event crisp, interesting, on time. Following that, the MC begins introduction of important persons in attendance.
6. Pause for live auction which includes an “ask” for a specific project. Do this before the award presentation as some people leave following the awards. (We also rolled out our new

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level of Fellows at this event.)

7. 9:15 – 9:40 p.m. Following live auction and “ask”, start video presentations for each of the award recipients. Ask them to limit their remarks to 5 minutes. Present flowers and introduce the Gala chair(s).

8. 10:00 p.m. dinner ends after desert. Cash bar continues. Have a well known band play for several hours with other entertainments such as rolled cigars on the terrace to encourage people to stay.

9. 12:00 p.m. event concludes

Immediately After

1. Do auction check out

2. Clean up and take any unclaimed auction items with you or to a room that you may have for the evening.

3. Return all rented and borrowed equipment.

Within a Few Weeks

1. Write and send personal thank you notes or call and thank all the sponsors and table purchasers.

2. Identify the table and other sponsors in the monthly news letter and on the website.

3. Send tax deduction information to auction donors, table and other sponsors.

4. Evaluate the event to prepare for next year. Schedule to send letters to all donors for the silent and live auctions, you will be surprised by the numbers that will send another item for the next year with only a letter reminding them of the event and asking for a gift for the next gala.

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GALA TIPS:

Gala Chair (s) vs Steering Committee

A strong and visionary Gala chair is important and it is the person responsible for overseeing the event. Try to find persons with experience in event planning. We also suggest that the executive director remain involved with significant decisions. Because this is a labor intensive job, consider co-chairs that work well together and are capable of dividing up the work. Chairs ultimately may be the strongest persons to ask for underwriting or sponsor sales to law firms and vendors, so having 2 persons on the job has its advantages. Holding this position is an honor, and the event chair(s) should be persons who can call managing partners, legal vendors and other significant persons in your legal community for money and help. A few duties of the Gala chair include selecting the food and beverage menu, choosing and booking entertainment, choosing or fulfilling a theme, overseeing decorations and handling registration. If you determine that there are possible advertizing dollars you can obtain, get a separate chair to seek these dollars.

If there is not one person that stands out, then develop a steering committee. This committee could include board members, the executive director and a Gala chair. The steering committee will then be responsible for making the initial decisions about your gala.

The Gala chair or committee should plan on regular contact with other committee leaders. It is important to honor the time commitment of volunteers and if possible, use conference calls, email and spread sheets for communications. We often send ideas by text and photos. Keep your board regularly updated on progress as they are an important part of a successful event and momentum is important.

Print and Promotions Chair

The print and promotions chair will oversee getting communication out about the event and taking care of all printed material, including invitations and the event program. If you have a staff person that can handle this for your organization, use them as this includes many time sensitive tasks that are difficult for volunteer attorneys to keep on track.

Auction Chair

The auction chair should be well connected in the legal and general community and will be responsible for getting local businesses and donors to give items for silent and/or live auctions. Some smaller items may be combined with others and purchases, such as glasses and baskets for presentation with wine or other items should be considered. We typically have 100-150 items between the silent and live auctions. We have also successfully auctioned off decorations such as mounted posters, and standup figures.

Chairs should begin recruiting additional volunteers to fill their committees. Depending on

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the size of your volunteer base and interest level of your volunteer attorneys, you may want to structure your event committees differently than what is suggested. Consider getting the young lawyers involved and offer lower ticket prices or free tickets for significant volunteer hours. If you have an active Lawyer's Auxiliary, consider asking for their assistance with auction items, decorations or day of the event set up. Look for volunteers with specific talents, and assign them tasks that they can use their talents to accomplish.

Date

The date may be more important than the place. Look closely at your bar/foundation calendar. You want to pick a date that is not in conflict with other major bar/foundation events. Whether you use staff, volunteers or a combination of both, the key players are likely to overlap in other important events and you need them to be at their best for all events.

For a significant, formal event with awards and dancing, a weekend will work best. Additionally, decorations and setup are likely to take hours, so a Saturday may be your best day. Be sure to look at your community calendar before choosing a date to prevent scheduling your gala on the same day as a major community event and to make sure your gala is not competing with another big fundraising event that overlaps with your target guests. Avoid religious, cultural or national/state holidays and other potential conflicts.

Location

Look for venues to hold your event as early as possible. If your gala is scheduled at a popular time, some sites could be booked a year in advance.

Other location/venue tips

Decide if you will be catering or using the venue's catering. Many locations require you to use their services. If you do not want to coordinate obtaining tables, linens, etc. Then go with a location or caterer that will provide that service for you. This guide will heavily favor using a centrally located hotel with on site catering. The lowest bidder may not be the best. Take into account what amenities are offered for your needs. Some venues may have their own caterer or provide their own tables, decorations and audiovisual equipment. Don't forget to look at the venue's payment schedule. If you will need to put down a deposit first, be sure you have the money available for it up front.

Consider the lawyers and the guests who will be attending your gala. Choosing a more exclusive location may attract more people. In an area with few major donors and less giving potential, choosing an expensive location and charging high ticket prices could make it difficult to recruit attendees.

Try and charge the entire giant bill from the hotel/venue to a bank card that will give travel award points that can be used to buy airline tickets to use with the live auction next year to exotic locations that have been donated by members

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Questions for Venues:

1. How many guests can you comfortably accommodate for a sit-down dinner?
2. Is there enough space to host a reception, silent/live auctions as well as a sit-down dinner?
3. Is there disability access?
4. Do you have a copy of the floor plan?
5. Are you unionized? If so, what are the implications for setting-up, hosting and cleaning up the event?
6. What is the room availability the day of and day before?
7. Would I be able to enter the event space the day or night before to set-up?
8. Will you book the space the day of the event such that we cannot get in to decorate and set up until after they have gone? If this is the case, consider passing on this venue as you will regret it when your hard working decorations volunteers cannot both get the room ready and be at the event on time.
9. Is there adequate guest parking? If so, what is the cost? Try and negotiate a reduced rate for the event and pre event preparation.
10. What is included in the cost of the venue rental? Items that may be offered as part of it are different colored linens, votives for the tables, some types of centerpieces (trays or mirrors may be helpful), draping around the room (pipe and drape). This may cost extra, but may have great impact and be part of your decorating budget. What are your lighting choices and if extra, what is the cost. Same questions for audio visual.
11. What may be attached to the walls and ceiling? Is there a cost for attaching to drops (usual) and are you able to attach or does as staff person have to do it?
12. Do you have extra charges for bar, kitchen and/or wait staff?
13. Taxes and gratuities included?
14. Do you have audio visual or DJ services?
15. Do you have a liquor license? Do we have the ability to bring in own liquor? (Usually cheaper)
16. Do provide linens for a cost, if so what are the choices?
17. Do you require or offer event security personnel?
18. What are the terms of payment? Is a deposit required?
19. If this is at a hotel, ask if you can get reduced rates for overnight guests and try and get a room or two comped for the staff, president and gala chair that may be there all day decorating and organizing the event with no time to go home to change. These people may be doing wrap up as well and need a place to stay.
20. If required to use in-house catering, what are my menu options for number of courses, appetizers, main courses and desserts? If you are doing a theme party, what ability does the chef have to change menu items to go with the theme?
21. Are there coat check services? If so, is there a cost to my guests?
22. Where would the delivery vehicles trucks with decorations and auction items be able to unload? Will an elevator be required to move supplies in and out of the event

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- space?
23. Do you have coverings for the windows? May we apply decorations to the windows?
 24. Am I allowed to hang signage and/or banners on the walls of the establishment? Do you have easels for posters and signage?
 25. If you are not using a on-site service, consider the following issues:
 - a. In the absence of in-house catering services, can I bring in my own supplier or do I have to use one of the venue's preferred suppliers?
 - b. If using an off-site supplier, will my caterer have access to adequate kitchen facilities or will I be required to set-up a temporary kitchen for the evening?
 26. Support:
 - a. Is there a coordinator who will be my main contact regarding the agreement and any questions that may arise before the event?
 - b. What kind of assistance will I receive on the day of the event?

After researching and acquiring all the information you need, compare the venues and determine which one would be the most suitable for your event. Whichever venue you choose, make sure there is a written agreement between the venue and you the organizer with all of the answers to the questions above resolved and in writing. The agreement will serve to outline terms, expectations and any rules or regulations.

Creating a Budget

Rule out venues and services that fall outside of your budget. Expenses can accumulate quickly in planning events, and if something is already outside of the budget, don't waste your time considering it.

After you have created a budget for your event, determine how much you will charge for tickets. Factor in the cost of the venue, catering services, meal, decorations, entertainment, and printing and publicity expenses. Keep in mind that your ticket cost should be based on the economic level of your community.

Setting Fundraising Goals

Ticket proceeds will only make up a portion of your gala's revenue. Set goals for how much you hope to raise through event program advertising and any additional money makers you have planned, such as a raffle or silent auction. Combining your gala with an additional fundraising event can maximize your guests' enjoyment and your profits. Often people are more willing to give to a few different things than to write one large check. Consider also adding a "fund-a-need" auction during the meal with a good video lead in and a persuasive MC or guest to do the initial "ask."

Event Format

How long will you allow for cocktails? Will there be entertainment or programs that take place during dinner or after? Use the event as an opportunity to restate and present your

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mission in a compelling and effective way. Schedule time in your program to thank donors and volunteers.

Design event materials

Once you have selected your theme, start thinking about the event materials you will require for your gala (e.g. save-the-date cards, tickets, website, invitations, evening program book and/or signage). Be creative! There are many ways to develop these pieces in a cost-effective manner. For example, recruit a volunteer designer who would be willing to take on this project for a small honorarium or if you are tech-savvy, purchase design software to create the pieces yourself. Please note if you do print the save-the-date cards, tickets or invitations, be sure the pieces are designed to fit into a mailing envelope. To manage event materials, create a schedule that allows adequate time for the design, approval, print, delivery and mail out processes.

Other Entertainment

In addition to the band, consider other entertainment to enhance the theme and event at the silent auction, during pre event happy hour and during the post event dancing. Some possible entertainment options include roving musical entertainment, cigar rolling demonstration (and an area that they can be smoked), carnival type of games with prizes, a pre-event band, fortune tellers, dancers (coordinating with the theme) and a video presentation about your organization, its mission and its work from the past year.

Creating Sponsor Packages

Sponsor packages will vary widely depending on your community and its economy. A price for a title sponsor in an affluent community would not be appropriate for other areas. Make your packages something that local businesses and donors would be interested in having. Offer lots of exposure, especially for the higher sponsor levels. Develop a compelling way to present your Foundation's mission and need in both print and spoken form.

Menu

Because of the format of the proposed gala event, a buffet style dinner is not recommended but if no awards are being given, it can be less expensive than a served meal, but also less formal. Make your menu choices based on your ticket price. When selecting your menu, you also will have to decide what beverage services you will provide. An open bar could eat up a large percentage of your menu budget, but it would also allow you to charge higher ticket prices and perhaps do better with live auction items and fund-a-need auctions. Check to see if your venue charges by the drink or by the bottle and if they charge a corkage fee for serving donated wine. Keep in mind that food costs are often negotiable, so assign the task of choosing the menu to someone who isn't afraid to negotiate. Discuss and determine what menu choices are best if you intend to have salads already plated on the table when guests sit down. In order to do that, the salads may be out for 30 or more minutes and have to be fresh and edible. Otherwise have the staff wait to serve them after guests begin to sit down.

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On the Tables -Program Book, menu, live auction material, etc

Start by choosing a size for your program book. Typical size is half of a 8½x11 page. Include the order of the ceremony, the award recipients, live auction items, the event and table sponsors and if you sell ads, the advertizing. Place the book in the seat. Prepare a menu and place it on the place setting. We used LP records donated with the menu on a round label stuck where the record labels were for one event. If you are selling the centerpieces, put tent cards that can be seen by both sides of the table on the tables. For large event sponsors, consider putting together a bag for each of their guests with themed items as gifts. Prepare bid cards for each guest in advance. This is one of the reasons we ask for the name of guests in advance.

Photographer

If the size and budget of your event merits it, consider hiring a photographer to take pictures of the guests and entertainment at your event. The photos could be used in newsletters and posted on your website after the event, and they could also be used to publicize next year's event. If you do choose to have pictures taken at your event, make sure you recruit someone with experience to handle the task. There may be a volunteer attorney that is capable of doing this for free.

Insurable Liability

Most hotels have general liability insurance, but you should still contact the venue you are contracting to determine if your event produces any additional liability issues.

Seating Charts

Develop a way for guests to identify their tables, such as a number incorporated into the centerpiece and putting diagrams with the location of table numbers at the entrances and the registration table. Make sure that on check-in that each guest is given their assigned table. We prepare bid cards for each guest in advance and put the seat number on the bid card for easy reference.

Determine event schedule

During a gala, there are many activities happening in a short period of time (e.g. cocktail reception, dinner, auctions and entertainment). Therefore it is crucial to develop a schedule that can accommodate all of these event components. Be sure to adhere to the schedule to avoid unnecessary delays as it may frustrate your guests.

Event Day Tasks

Make sure you arrive early enough on the day of the event to have everything set up and decorated before your vendors arrive. Have a system in place to confirm that all volunteers have arrived. Set up the registration table in a highly visible area, and allow plenty of room to avoid congestion. Be sure to have the area marked well with a prominent sign, and double check to make sure the table is set up and staffed properly.