

FINDING A VENUE CHECKLIST

The venue you choose is crucial to every element of your event success. Use this checklist as a guide to choose one that meets your event goals and needs.

Understanding Your Audience

Who is your event for? Your target audience will help determine the venue you choose.

Consider:

- Their average income
- Their tastes
- Their needs
- What they're used to at events like yours

Choosing a Location



Where your venue is located can play an important role in your choice.

The right venue should:

- Be convenient for most attendees
- Be easy to access by car and/or public transportation
- Have plenty of parking, preferably nearby
- Be located near accommodations, dining, and entertainment

PRO TIP: Boost attendee experience by providing city guides, so people can explore the area around your venue when meetings aren't in session. This is a unique way to network and unwind.

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Laying Out Your Goals & Theme

What do you want your event to accomplish?

- Educate attendees
- Allow vendors to showcase products or services
- Provide networking opportunities
- Showcase specific sponsors

Do you have a theme?

Event theme doesn't often dictate venue, as the type of event is usually more important. But if you have multiple similar venues to choose from and one ties into your theme, it might be a better choice.

PRO TIP: Different teams might have different goals. For instance, your sales team might aim to score a certain number of leads, while a social media team wants to hit a new level of engagement. Speak to all those involved to ensure your venue takes their goals into account.

Staying Within Your Budget

You'll spend a good chunk of your event budget securing your venue. The exact figure depends a lot on:

- The kind of space you're booking
- What services and facilities are provided



PRO TIP: You can expect to spend 30% to 40% of your budget on a turnkey space that provides catering, furniture, etc. The more of a blank canvas your space is the less budget it requires, although more money will go to hiring services and outfitting the space.

Booking a Venue

Some companies book years in advance to ensure they get the venues they want at the right times, but the rule of thumb is to start looking for a venue 9 to 12 months in advance.

- 6 months in advance if you're hosting a small dinner or similar function
- At least a year in advance for larger events like user conferences and sales kick-offs

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Questions to Ask When Choosing a Venue

When you're venue-hunting, it's vital to ask plenty of questions about each one you consider.

Event Space

- Can the venue accommodate the number of people you're expecting?
Early ticket sales can help you estimate venue size.
- How many entry points does the venue have?
- Where are the entry points located?
The venue you choose should be spacious enough that there are no bottlenecks between the entrance and registration area, and other major points in the venue.
- Are there multiple spaces in the venue, or is it all one room?
Many large venues are flexible and can change room configurations if necessary, so ask about the options.
- What is the venue's capacity for the kind of event you're holding?
Maximum capacity changes depending on whether your event is seated or standing and for the kind of seating set-up you want, so clarify what you need.
- Can you bring your own decorating team to transform the space?
- Are people on-site who can help set up beforehand and on the day of the event?
Ask for contact info.
- What kinds of space modifications are off-limits?
- Where are the fire exits located?
- What's the exit plan in case of emergency?

PRO TIP: How your attendees will use the space can help you determine what venues are suitable. If attendees will be watching presentations, a space that's full of columns or other obstructions is counterproductive. In spaces where food is served, they'll want enough room to eat comfortably, and there should be sufficient seating so everyone who wants to sit can do so.

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Accessibility

- Are there accessible restrooms?
- If the venue has stairs, are there alternatives, such as ramps and elevators, available?
- Are hallways, doors, and aisles wide enough for a wheelchair?
- If parking isn't right next to the venue, is there valet parking or a shuttle service?

Restrooms

- How many restrooms are available? Are there enough for the number of attendees you're expecting?
- Are gender-neutral restrooms available?
- If you expect children to attend, are there changing and nursing rooms available?

Parking

- Does the venue have its own parking area?
If not, is valet parking provided?
- If attendees must use a garage, can you arrange for a discounted rate?
- Can you arrange for a discount code for Uber or Lyft?
- How far is parking located from the venue?

If it's a long distance, is there venue transportation, such as shuttles or golf carts, available?

PRO TIP: If people are coming in from out of town to attend your event, provide them with information about public transport, including buses, trains, and light rail. Arranging pre-paid transportation for guests is a great way to ensure they get where they need to be, and makes a good impression!

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Seating

- How much seating is provided?
- If seating is provided, what style of seating is available?

PRO TIP: Even if seating is available, it might not be the right style for your event, so examine the seating provided. Make sure chairs are comfortable to sit in, especially if people will be sitting for long periods of time.

Food

- Does the venue serve food?
If so, do they allow event planners to arrange for outside catering?
- If outside catering is permitted, does the venue have a list of preferred catering contacts?
Sometimes using preferred vendors can get you a discount.
- Can you bring your own waitstaff, bartender, or catering staff?
- What kitchen and serving equipment is available on-site?
Ask about food storage, including refrigeration and how to cook and/or heat food.
- Where in the venue is the delivery area?
- Is there a corkage fee for bringing your own beverages?

Liquor License

- What alcohol restrictions apply?
- Does the venue have a liquor license, or do you need to get one?

Coat/Bag Check

- Is there a formal coat/bag check area?
If not, is there a space you can convert temporarily?
It should be large enough to accommodate your attendee list, be easily secured, and convenient to the entrance and registration area.

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Security

- Does the venue already use a specific security service, or do they have recommendations?
- If your company has its own preferred security outfit, make sure the venue is okay with security being contracted out.

PRO TIP: Not all events need security, but you should book it if your event is high-profile, invite-only, controversial, or it's been widely covered in the media, or if you're showcasing valuable items.

Electrical Access

- How many electrical outlets are available in key areas?
Where are they located?
- Are extension cords and power strips available to use, or should you bring your own?
- Are there voltage restrictions?
- Does the venue provide converters for people coming from overseas?
- Is there a generator available for emergency use?

Wi-Fi

- Is there Wi-Fi?
It's a must, unless you're hosting a retreat of some kind; don't assume it's available, even at a large venue.
- Are there restrictions on Wi-Fi use?

A/V Equipment

- Is any A/V equipment provided?
If so, is there a charge for rental?
- Does the venue have a preferred or recommended vendor for A/V rental?
- Will the venue allow you to bring in your own A/V equipment?

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Public Disturbances

- Do any noise restrictions apply to the venue or area?
This is important to know if you're planning live entertainment.
- Does the event need to end by a certain time?

Insurance

- Does the venue have liability insurance?
Most venues carry their own liability insurance; however, depending on the venue and nature of your event, you might be required to carry extra insurance, even if the venue already has it.

You don't have to do it alone. The right event planning company can manage everything, from event concept to finding the perfect venue, throwing a successful event, and executing post-event analysis.

