

A “How To” Guidebook for Event Planning

Case: Power to Change ry

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<p>This thesis is built on the basic structure of report writing at Haaga-Helia. I will begin the thesis by outlining the goals and aims of the product. These goals are based on the instructions I received in the course "Thesis and Methods" and from my own professional experience in the area of planning processes, as well as on the needs of the commissioning party, Power to Change ry. After explaining the goals of the thesis, I will then introduce the commissioning party by explaining its history and the activities in which it engages. To dive into the field of event designing, I will then talk about the key concepts of event planning and event management. I will take the meetings of a small business event as an example to explain this topic. In section three, I will show the "backstage" processes of my work, including how I planned to write the thesis, as well as show what methods I used to get the information that was relevant to my product.</p> <p>The product of this thesis will function as a guidebook for the future event planning team of Power to Change ry. I have worked in this organisation for five years, and have studied in Haaga-Helia for four years, which has increased my passion, experience, and knowledge in event planning, as well as launching my current career in wedding planning. This book will aid in clear and concise event planning, as well as helping planning teams avoid some of the major mistakes commonly made in organising events.</p> <p>This guidebook will serve to assist a person in every step of planning an event, such as the ones organised by Power to Change ry, from creating an initial event team to the final minutes before, and the responsibilities during, the actual event. In addition to outlining the full structure of organising an event, this book presents the most important "dos and don'ts" of event planning. My product will be used for events of all sizes, from simple meetings to full weekend conferences or trips. Each type of event has its own specific planning process, timeline, and "to-do" list.</p> <p>By using the step-by-step guide presented in this thesis, an event team will have the benefit of knowing exactly what to do, and when, for each kind of event they will be organising in the future. This step-by-step guide informs a planning team when to begin each part of the planning process, and it lays out a timeline for each kind of event.</p> <p>Since the creation of this thesis idea in early Autumn of 2018, and throughout the process of writing it, I have used the guidebook contained in it to successfully plan three team meetings, as well as one larger conference. Because of the clear instructions and guidance of this book, these events were planned and completed smoothly and with ease. In addition, fewer mistakes were made in the process. While organising these events, I monitored and evaluated the process of planning in order to gain the most relevant information for the future product of this thesis. I used the events organised by Power to Change ry in my time as a volunteer, as well as the personal weddings I have organised for my business, to collect data and experience on what is needed to successfully plan different styles of events.</p>	
Keywords Event coordinating. Guidebook. Event management.	

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1 Introduction

No event can successfully happen without proper planning. Planning events takes time, commitment, dedication, creativity, organization and passion. In this thesis I will introduce the basic terms at the event planning field, my planning process and methods that I have used to produce the guide book for my commission party with the high quality. It is a clear guide to what an event is, definitions of different types of events for clarity, everything needed to plan a successful event, specific steps required in the event planning process, and examples of how proper planning can positively impact the events organized by your commission party, as they helped my commission party Power to Change ry.

Starting with the framework of event planning in Section 2, I tell about the basics of event planning. After defining and explaining the key concepts of structuring the event organization process, I cover what it is like to manage an event and how to make this process easier, as well as what elements come with a successful event. I cover the theoretical part because nothing can be done without a fundamental knowledge first.

Following this basic framework foundation, the practical parts of event planning are laid out in Section 3. In this section, I cover topics such as planning process for writing this thesis and the methods that I used to collect needed information, the “do’s and don’ts” of organizing an event, and process of how interviews and monitoring were done. I delineate the specific research methods that I used to produce this guide book. I will examine some practical examples and understand what mistakes were made in the planning and organizing process, as well as what solutions were discovered in the process.

In Section 4, I tell about the results of the steps and instructions in sections one through three. It is important to have measurable results, so you can see if your changes are helping what you intended for them to help.

Following this, as a result of my work, there will be a complete and all-encompassing guide book for my commission party. This can be found in the appendix. This guidebook has clear instructions for the planning of each event that my commission party will organize, from very small meetings, to large, 3 day long conferences, and I hope it is clear enough to be used by anyone, even those without event planning experience. Also I was blessed with this opportunity practice my knowledge gained during my studding in Haaga-Helia. I have seen that I really got necessary skills to become a professional in this area.

1.1 Goals of the Thesis

The goal of this thesis is to produce an event planning guide book for the non-profit organization Power to Change ry. I personally have been working for this organization, as a volunteer, for 5 years and have been involved in organizing their different events. I choose this topic because I see that there is no exact structure in planning and executing their events. If any organization wants to grow, it is highly important to have a set of rules and regulations that will help the organizational team to do their job as professionally as possible. In her book EPDF, Judy Allen explains the rise in the importance of event planning and why it is necessary. She states that:

"In the past seven years, event planning has also evolved in many areas. It is now a proven means for a corporation to increase brand awareness, develop new business, nurture customer loyalty and drive growth, and corporate clients- both for profit and non-profit – are looking for event planners who not only understand event design, strategic planning, logistics, timing and budget management, but are proficient in how events can be used to market and brand their company." (Allen 2009, 17).

I would like to point out in this work a basic step-by-step planning and executing process. Since the organization is growing, the number of people involved in this process will also grow, and there will be a big need for such a guidebook to make every project unique, and at the same time, organized and functional.

It is known worldwide that if you want to see results of your job, you need to set objectives for yourself. Here below are four goals of this thesis.

Thesis objectives:

- 1- To produce a good quality guide book;
- 2- To make an overview of the event planning process at the commission party;
- 3- To make an analysis of what has been done wrong and how to improve it;
- 4- To support the organizational team with the results of my work.
- 5- To practice my knowledge of event planning.

1.2 Structure and Methods

This is a product oriented thesis. The objective of a product-oriented thesis is to “ascertain the issues relating to a product or service and create a thesis around the development of

these. A product-based study may include, for example, both product and process development.” (Drake & Salmi 2018)

I created this guidebook by monitoring the events held by Power to Change over their first five years. I collected the information needed to create the product of this thesis by interviewing the teams of each event, asking questions of what needed improvement, and analysing what worked (as well as what didn't work). With this information, I had gathered the knowledge, experience, and ability to create an all-encompassing book for how to plan these events with ease. This thesis provides the basic information on event planning, and then offers the practical uses of event organization.

1.3 Commission Party

Power to Change ry is a non-profit organization that was founded in October of 2013 and has been operating for the past five years. The founder created this organization with the initial purpose of serving and sharing Christian values with Russian-speaking people in the Capitol region of Finland. In the past year, the vision has grown to incorporate serving Finnish-speaking people in different cities in Finland. The organization consists of nearly 15 departments with around 20 volunteers. I am the event planner of this organization and am in charge of organizing all events held by Power to Change ry.

As mentioned before, Power to Change ry was launched in October 2013, so it has been open for a bit more than 5 years. During the first 4 years, all of the events were planned and organized by a group of 11 people. The main responsibility was on the Head of this organization. Because the Head of organization led and dealt with numerous different tasks for the organization as a whole, he could not concentrate much on the processes included in coordinating events. Because of this, all events during first 4 years were of low quality and created big pressure and stress for the Head of this organization. That is where this guidebook comes in and will be of big help to this organization.

All this of this work has been done by only a few volunteers. These people are not professionals in this field. Therefore, the quality of these events was not high, however it met the needs of the organization. Now, Power to Change ry is aiming to grow not just in the Russian speaking community of the capital region, but spread their impact to also the Finnish society in many different areas in Finland. That is why I believe that this organization will grow very fast. As any big community or organization, they need some rules and regulations to secure its values.

Here below is a corporate structure of Power to change ry:

- Head of the organization (1 person)
- General leaders team (11 people)
- Departments leaders team (about 15 people)
 - Media
 - Technics
 - Meeting guests
 - IT
 - Events
 - Education/ classes
 - Music
 - Finances
 - Youth
 - Kids
 - Families
 - Small groups
 - Mission trips
 - Statistics

- Subdivision leaders (about 20 people)
 - livestreams
 - videos
 - photo
 - creative
 - social media
 - articles
 - design/brand
 - marketing/ adds
 - typography
 - web page
 - projector, background music
 - sound
 - lighting
 - welcome team/ hosts
 - security
 - cleaning
 - translators
 - décor
 - catering

- Google Suit
 - Planning Center People
 - work with newbies
 - leadership
 - team-building
-
- Volunteers (20-30 people)

As a result, I have seen that the team is growing. New people are coming and every new person needs to know the basic principles of events in Power to change ry. Communication between all teams during the event is highly important so that everyone understands what is happening in the event, to avoid confusion and mishaps. Therefore, I had an idea to make a guide book for my commission party. I see that they have a need for it and I can fulfill this duty. This guidebook will be woven into the future of every event Power of Change ry will coordinate. The book is meant to be malleable and adaptable, as the event planning team gains more knowledge and experience in planning. The industry of event planning will change as the times change, but the skeleton of an event will always be the same.

2 Basics of Event Planning

It is first important to understand what an event is in the context of event management. An event “can be described as a public assembly for the purpose of celebration, education, marketing or reunion. Events can be classified on the basis of their size, type and context” (Event Education 2007).

The official definition of event planning, or event coordination, is “coordinating every detail of meetings and conventions, from the speakers and meeting location to arranging for printed materials and audio-visual equipment”, but the more practical definition is “the process of managing a project... including budgeting, establishing timelines, selecting and reserving the event sites, acquiring permits, planning food, coordinating transportation, developing a theme, arranging for activities, selecting speakers and keynotes, arranging for equipment and facilities, managing risk, and developing contingency” (International Institute of Event Management).

Before starting the practice of event management, it is important to familiarize oneself with the key concepts, basic steps, and life hacks of event planning. In this section, I will discuss the most crucial steps of event planning, the elements of a successful event, distinguishing between the purposes and audience for different types of events, and how to make the job and life of the event planner easier.

2.1 Key Concepts of Event Planning

Defining the purpose and concept of a particular event is an essential starting point of the event management process, and is aimed at ensuring the event’s success, as well as smooth production. Event planner and planning team need to brainstorm the goals and objectives of the exact event and ensure that these aims are specific to the particular event, measurable for later analysis, achievable, realistic and with a clear time frame.

The timing of an event can be crucial to its success. Consideration also needs to be given to the time of day this event will be run. This must fit with an event concept and target audience. Occasionally, a small survey- a questionnaire used to gain the opinions of a large audience (Drake & Salmi 2018) - can be conducted to understand the best and most necessary timing for needed target audience. For example, it is definitely not a good idea to organize a family event starting at 9pm.

In the book “Special Events: A New Generation and the Next Frontier”, Joe Goldblatt states that “all successful events have five critical stages in common to ensure their consistent effectiveness. These phases, or steps, of successful Event Leadership are research, design, planning, coordination, and evaluation” (Goldblatt 2010, 44). These are the aspects that I aim to include and perfect in every event that coordinated by me. Below is a graphic on the five stages of event planning, as written by Goldblatt.

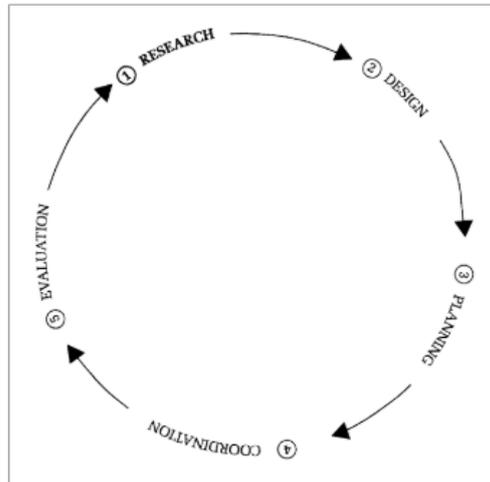


Figure 1: Five Stages of Event Planning

2.2 Event Management

The subject of event management could involve creating and coordinating large events which can encompass conferences, concerts, trade fairs, festivals and ceremonies. The first, and possibly most important goal of the event management team is working to identify the target audience, formulating the event concept, planning the overall logistics of the event and conducting project management during the planning, as well as the day-of duties of the event as a whole.

The most important and necessary skill for the success of an event planner is, of course, organisational ability. The ability to multitask and keeping many moving parts working simultaneously is essential to the overall function and success of any event. Along with that comes the need for exemplary time-management skills, or the “systematic, priority-based structuring of time allocation and distribution among competing demands” (Business Dictionary). Being able to prioritize and stay on task are essential skills necessary for a successful event.

The beginning stages of the event planning process start with meeting with a client and collecting information about the client’s idea, vision and goal for the event. Together with a client event designer will develop an event budget as well as discuss the overall concept or theme.

When the budget is ready event planner should finalize the concept for the event, work to line up a location and vendors, and obtain any necessary permits and insurance.

Also, the event management team is in charge to coordinate with the client concerning the engaging speakers, if needed, as well as taking care about any other extras, such as parking and transportation.

My favorite part of the work of event manager is during the event. On the day of the event, it is incredibly important to be on-site in order to run the event and handle any problems that could arise. Following the event, the event manager will wrap up any remaining details and get feedback from the client.

There is a very big difference between visitors of business events and visitors of leisure events. First of all it because the crucial part of a leisure event destination is markedly different from those that hold and attend a business event. Also the decision to attend a leisure event is taken in a totally different context and by a different “person” than that for a business event. These differences should be noted, understood, and dealt with accordingly by the event management team (The Winning Edge 1993).

2.2.1 Elements of a Successful meeting

Here I will take meeting as an example of small business event. I have found that meetings are usually not the place where the business is done, but that meetings are mostly more about communication. A meeting is defined by the “formal or informal deliberative assembly of individuals called to debate certain issues and problems, and to take decisions. Formal meetings are held at definite times, at a definite place, and usually for a definite duration to follow an agreed on agenda” (BusinessDictionary.com)

The book “Into the Heart of Meetings” says that: “If the meeting is useful, people do not complain about wasted time, because they are aware that what is happening in the meeting room will turn out to be useful later, somewhere else” (Groot & Vijver 2013). I like this quote, because it is true. All business will resume just after the communication within the meeting, but this communication should deliver to a participant the clear idea of its importance and atmosphere related to company culture.

Some experts use to think that meetings are a stage. It has physical similarities such as: the presence of a stage, the attention focused on the performer and the need to catch and fix audience’s attention. There are also aspects such as all the equipment need for the production (sound, light, technique, etc.) and catering. All this contributes to making the atmosphere similar to that in the theatre. But then the problem is to minimize the distance

between the meeting world and the real world, as well as helping your participant find a connection with their work and to make this time more efficient for them.

I remember one very good example from a business meeting fair at "Messukeskus". The speaker was talking about a meeting for bank employees. They were looking for a proper venue and came up with a brilliant, in my opinion, idea to organize a meeting in an old castle. A castle is a symbol of power and security, and these are the values that the bank has, and wants to project to its customers and clients. So this was not just a meeting, but an overall experience that supported the meaning of this business. The meeting brought an inspirational mood for the audience.

2.2.2 Life Hacks for an Event Planner

Event planner is the person that have to have own personal life hacks to plan an events, and keep stress out of the process. Usually, an event hacks is overlapping with a lifestyle hacks. In reality, it is impossible to be totally chaotic person and brilliant event manager. The personal life of an event planner should be a model for the way they will plan events. A client wants to see a professional, organised person when they are choosing who to trust the fate of their event to.

One of the most important question that event planner has is how to present the message of an event so that it will reflect the life of their participants. I like how the book "Made to stick: How Some Ideas Survive and Others Die" by Chip and Dan Heath presents a six-step solution for this question. They are saying that your message has to be:

1. Simple. It should be stripped down until only the core message is left and at the same time is should be applicable to the daily life.
2. Unexpected. Present your core message in a new way that breaks from the conventional expectations of your audience.
3. Concrete. Associate your message with tangible things.
4. Credible. Experts, knowledge, statistics, etc. All of this could help you make your message credible.
5. Emotional. Include emotional appeal, it will induce a stronger response.
6. Story. The best way to make your message memorable is telling a story.

By applying these six steps, you as an event planner will finish your mission successfully, and this event will make a difference in people's minds and stick for a longer time in their head. (Heath 2008, 14-16)

3 Methods, Planning, and Analysis for thesis

When I started thinking about thesis topic, I was sure that I would connect it to this particular commission party. The first question was this: how can I make an impact on this organization with my thesis project that will support its growth? In order to do this, it was important to clearly analyze what needed fixing or help. Before I could decide what my commission party needed, I had to observe all parts of the organization connected to what I was trying to improve. After doing this, and only after this, I was able to fix and improve the problems and lack in the commission party.

As I previously mentioned, I have been involved in the planning, organizing and executing process at Power to Change ry for about 5 years now, and for the last year I have been serving as the leading event manager there. All the work that I have done there has been as a volunteer. Because I feel that the values of this organization match with mine, I feel compelled to help this organization. With my skills, passion, and experience, I have strong feeling that I can improve the event management field in this place. It is my hope, and plan, to make the planning process easier and more clear for the future of this commission party.

3.1 Planning and collecting information

At the begging on the first thesis session, I listened to exhaustive information about the different types of thesis. I learned about product orientated thesis and clearly understood for myself that this is exactly the kind of report I want to do. After the first lesson, I carefully studied useful pages in Moodle: "Thesis, Meeting Industry" and "Thesis and methods". I also studied that "The objective of a product-oriented thesis is to ascertain the issues relating to a product or service and create a thesis around the development of these." (Drake & Salmi 2018). Next, I took as a basis the instructions for writing a thesis from MyNet. Based on the data written in this instruction, I wrote the initial table of content, which I later upgraded based on the information I received.

The next step was to find the necessary data about the organization. I received this information through monitoring and interviewing. At first I collected information about the creation of the organization. Since I have been an active participant in this organization since its inception, for 5 years I have accumulated a lot of information I need about Power to Change ry. All additional information I got directly from the head of the organization. It took me one month to receive the information, taking into account several personal meetings and also time for registration of all information in the report. At the beginning I found

out the object of my analysis. In this thesis I am analyzing the work of a non-profit organization Power to Change ry. It was founded in October 2013. The general manager of this organization is Andrei Hinkonen. He and his wife Anastasia Hinkonen got an idea of making an organization that will help people and share Christian values throughout the capital area of Finland. Power to change ry provides services mostly for the Russian speaking community in the capital area.

After defining the object of the analysis, I will show the main activities of this organization. To understand all of these numbers, I have observed the endeavors of Power to change ry for the past 5 years, starting from October 2013 until the end of December 2018.

In organizing each event, Power to Change ry involved not only the head of the organization, but also a small team of department leaders and volunteers. In order to collect information that will be objective, I conducted several interviews with the organizational team. I have asked them this few questions: "What was the biggest event of this year/ last year/ last 5 years?", "How many small meetings do you have every month?", "What is the average amount of participants are at Sunday meetings/ camps / conferences?". All respondents were open to the interview and it was easy to get necessary information. Here below, as a result of these questions, you can find a list of events organized and held by Power to Change ry:

- 220 Sunday open events for an about 20-70 participants plus a couple hundred on-line viewers from streaming of this event.
- 6 corporate Christmas events (Pikkujoulut)
- 5 anniversaries
- 2 week-long tent events in the city center called "Hope festival"
- 3 times camp in Kirkkonumi for a 30-50 participants for a few days each.
- more than 200 different meetings (team building, brainstorming, leadership, etc..)
- 2 international dual-language conferences for 80-150 participants in 2018

After defining the main activities of this organization, I will show the core team that is responsible for Power to change's projects. As I mentioned before Andrei Hinkonen is the Head of organization. Together with his wife Anastasia Hinkonen, he founded this organization. In the process, a team of 9 more people were gathered and Power to change ry started its work. In the beginning, projects were very simple. The Head of the organization planned and lead all projects on his own. After every project, there was a team meeting

where they discussed what was good and what needed to be changed. By brainstorming after each event, the team became more confident in what they did and there was efficient growth of this organization, since their events were becoming better and better. In the past 5 years the organization has grown to have 15 different departments.

3.2 Data gathering

To find out needed information, I used several methods.

First is analysis of the potential capacity of this organization. I was lucky that my commission party is tracking numbers of participants at every event on a special application "Planning Center". Therefore, it was easy for me to get a number of volunteers and team members. Having numbers of volunteers and team members and knowing their professional strengths and weaknesses, I can estimate the potential growth of this organization. Now organization is about 75 people and team is about 30 people. With this we can calculate that 1 leader is taking care of 2,5% of the total amount of people. In the last season (the past 3 months), we have received 20 new volunteers, who are potential leaders. Therefore, potential growth of the organization in the near future is about 50 people.

The next thing that I did is gather feedback from the team, volunteers and participants of the different events. I asked 2 questions: "What did you like the most at this particular event?" and "What critique do you have to make this event better?". The most popular answer from the behalf of the team was that their work was clear and they were excited to work together. For suggestions for the future, they said there was a lack of information about other departments, and lack of communication between each other. Therefore, I will mention in the guidebook how to avoid these problems. From volunteers, I have received such feedback: the most favorite part for them was being able to feel that they are a part of the project and to have a look at the "behind the scenes" of an event; the most common suggestion for improvement was having more team meetings together for better communication within departments. The feedback from the participants was mostly positive. Usually Power to change ry knows its target market and since there are not many random people, all participants are truly satisfied with a result of the event. I received some selected reviews from elders for whom music was too loud, speaker spoke too fast or location was difficult to find, but these are small problems that can be fixed easily.

From the beginning of my work as a volunteer in this organization, I was trying to help our Head of Organization, sometimes doing the job of his assistant. For the first few years, it was hard for me to completely replace him at the position of event planner, because I did not feel that I have enough skills and competence to do this. In August 2017, I received the position of leading event manager at Power to Change ry. Since that time, it has been

in my heart and mind to restructure and renew the planning processes that the organization had in place. I felt that this was incredibly necessary, especially if this organization wants to grow more. During the past 4 years, I have observed the style of event planning used by the organization. My main question for observation was: “What values do they include in every event?”. So, what is the event about? Is it just an ordinary meeting or is it something more? In this work I am showing what is happening “behind the scene” when events are organized in Power to Change ry.

3.3 Mistakes and solutions

In this part I will outline the “dos and don’ts” in event planning, as well as discuss the solutions for these different situations.

Dos	Don’ts
Do plan in advance.	Don’t wait for a last day to plan your event.
Do invest resources and time in your team.	Don’t let your team member do everything by them own.
Do be available for people.	Don’t be indifferent to your team members.
Do be calm and friendly.	Don’t be too demanding to your team.
Do have an assistance.	Don’t be flashy.
Do double check readiness.	Don’t panic.
Do have checklists	Don’t take work to home.
Do sleep well the day before the event.	Don't put off an important call for later
Do meet your team after the event.	
Do regard your team for a good work.	

Possible difficulties and solutions:

1- A vendor recalled their services a few days before the event. First, you have to get compensation form it regarding what is written in the contract. Second, you must contact another vendor that could provide you same service in a short time. The last thing to do is to inform your new vendor about plan of the event and details, as well as inform your team members about the new vendor.

2- Technical problems. Sometimes at the event, technical problems with either the audio and video equipment or technician will occur. If you can test everything beforehand, this problem is most likely to be avoided. But what if a problem happens during the event? You, as an event planner, need to react fast and find creative solutions. For example, if you cannot connect electro instruments – use acoustic ones. If your projector doesn’t work – find a big screen, or few screens if necessary.

3- Catering brought the incorrect order. First check contract to ensure that the problem was not with your order. If the problem is not yours, then you have to talk with catering team to see if they could they fix this situation in a short time. If not – take compensation and order necessary food from another vendor.

4- Premises have ventilation problems. Use open doors during the sessions, make sessions shorter and more breaks.

4 Results

This opportunity to write product orientated thesis brings me a lot. First of all, it is assumption of what I have learned during all my studies, especial during last few years. Every course that I have studied guide me to become a professional in my area. Working on this thesis helped me to understand what I can already do as a professional event planner. I did not feel myself as a specialist in this field, but after finishing this report I really see that I can make my first steps in the event designing field. By making analysis I was able to find out the problem that my commission party has. Then using skills that I got at Haaga Helia I have designed my product that you can found at the appendices.

The product produced by me for this thesis has already proved itself to be a successful and important asset for Power to Change ry. The General Manager of the organisation has already given high praise and affirmation of the effectiveness and importance of this project for the coordination, and therefore, success of our events. Since the creation of this thesis idea and its subsequent formation, the guidebook contained it in has aided in 2 bigger events planned by Power to Change ry, as well as improving the planning of their weekly Sunday gatherings.

By analysing the past five years of Power to Change events, I made this guide book with the purpose to improve the planning and events we organize, and it has already succeeded in this goal. Before the creation of this guidebook, the structure of planning each event was confusing and very scattered. This guidebook has now made the planning process easy to understand and very coordinated, so that the event team can spend less time focusing on the logistics of the planning process, and more time brainstorming the creative side of the event, contributing to more unique, special, and well-planned events.

In addition, this book has allowed me to pass down the responsibility of being the head event planner for every event coordinated by Power to Change ry. This book has opened up the possibility to quickly and easily train new members of my event planning team in the logistics of event management and coordination. Because of this, there are now more volunteers with extensive knowledge and experience in event planning, meaning that Power to Change can have even greater events.

From creating this thesis, I have learned some very important lessons about the world of event planning. The first is that the more details you plan in advance, the easier the event will be during the event. I also learned that it is important to consider cultural differences when organizing events in foreign countries, and take the differences into account in the way you plan and coordinate events. It is also very important to get feedback as soon as

possible following the event, so that the details are not forgotten. I learned that it is vital to take care of the event team, by providing them with snacks, coffee, and a quiet place to relax during their break. Communication between all teams during the event is highly important so that everyone understands what is happening in the event, to avoid confusion and mishaps. Lastly, it is important that every event is unique and individual to the people, theme, and concept that it is catering to.

Power to Change ry recently coordinated a Women's Conference. Though I was the head manager of this event, I used this conference to train three other volunteers in conference event planning, using this guidebook. The conference was beautifully planned with ease. Now, one of these three volunteers is ready and equipped to be the manager of the next conference or event that our organization coordinates.

This guidebook will be woven into the future of every event Power of Change ry will coordinate. The book is meant to be malleable and adaptable, as the event planning team gains more knowledge and experience in planning. The industry of event planning will change as the times change, but the skeleton of an event will always be the same. This guidebook has provided, and will continue to provide, the basic structure and outline needed to successfully coordinate a Power to Change ry event.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Product

**Step-by-step plan
organizing and coordinating events in
Power to Change ry**

Proverbs 16:9 (Bible) -

*A man's heart devises his way,
but the Lord directs his steps.*

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1. Introduction

This is the practical, step by step guide book for planning events at Power to Change ry. Following this guidebook will give you everything needed to successfully organize any of the events listed below, as well as provide you with the foundational knowledge for coordinating any new events that may come. To use this guidebook, follow the step by step of the activity you are planning, or the activity closest to the one you are planning, if it is not specifically listed. Use this guidebook for everything you will coordinate, so that no detail is missed when planning. If you find that something is missing, please add it to this guidebook for future events. When planning a new event that is not yet in the book, please add the new event to the book as well.

2. List of organizational activities:

- home Bible study groups
- team meetings in different areas (music, video, media, children, women / men, etc.)
- Sunday event
- prayer evenings
- leadership meetings
- general team leaders' meetings
- team building retreats
- seminars
- conferences
- camps
- holiday events

Organizing each of these events requires clear planning. The duration of planning depends on the size of the event.

Below you can find a rough outline for organizing each type of event, which you can follow to ensure ease in the planning process, without extra stress. By following these guidelines, your event will have the style and format of the events organized by Power to Change ry.

3. Each event

a) Home group:

1. Each home group consists of 4 parts:
 1. greeting and "breaking the ice" (the introductory part is aimed at ensuring that a person distracted from everyday questions can tune into the home group)
 2. music (live or recorded)
 3. reading of scripture (I advise you to choose the places of scripture used in the Sunday event)
 4. prayer (about one common needs or personal needs of each)
 - * There may be food on the home group, but it is NOT REQUIRED.It is always possible to distribute who will be responsible for this, if you plan to have a snack or drink tea with the home group at the beginning of the meeting.
2. To effectively conduct a home group, you must prepare in advance!!!! Your personal summary of Sunday event helps you build good questions for your home group.
3. Each home group should have its personal CHAT (preferably in Telegram). In this chat, all members of the home group can write their needs, thoughts and also share ideas and encourage one another to take part in Power to Change activities.
4. 1-2 days before the home group, the leader should remind everyone about a home group and find out exactly who will come and who will not (this can be done through the general chat of the home group or through a personal message).
5. If you notice that a person misses the home group 3 or more times without a clear reason - you should meet with the person and discuss this matter.

b) Team meetings:

Many team meetings have an organizational plan similar to the home group, BUT the main difference is that the team meeting always has a specific topic or goal regarding the work of this team, which the team should discuss and find a solution.

To arrange a team meeting you will need:

- find and book a room (know in advance the approximate number of people);
- think over the topic (or find the person who will be responsible for the topic);
- think over food (we always try to have a basic “tea / coffee with cookies” package at these meetings, you can add or change something as you see fit);
- In advance (at least 1 week, better sooner), sign up each participant (personally or through the team’s general chat) and notify about the meeting;
- remind of the meeting 1-2 days before;
- consider what technology you need at the meeting (laptop, projector, speakers, mic., etc.) and arrange it;
- leave the meeting room clear and in a proper form after completion;
- Do not forget to show LOVE and Christian values in everything :)

Components of the meeting:

- greeting
- coffee time (no more than 15 minutes)
- prayer and the beginning discussion of the meeting's theme
- decisions made (must be outlined and uploaded to the folder of this team drive)
- closing words
- free time

c) Sunday event:

Sunday event is usually the central event at Power to Change ry for the whole week. It has a clear structure, recorded per minute in "Planning Center Services" program. **IMPORTANT:** the Sunday meeting program must be fully planned in advance in 2-3 days. In case of force majeure, it is allowed to make minor adjustments later, BUT you must make sure that all teams are aware of the changes in the plan.

Components of the event:

- greeting
- music
- prayer and announcement of this event
- greeting the speaker
- speech
- call to prayer
- arts (music, dance, video, etc.)
- week news
- closing word

To arrange this event you will need:

- premises;
- team (music team, speaker, guards, welcome team, lighting technician, sound technician, video team, prayer team, custodial staff, teacher for children, translator if needed, statistician, photographer);
- notify everyone in advance (no less than a week) about their participation and role;
- fill out an event plan by Thursday (2 days before the event);
- download all video, audio, photo materials that will be used at the meeting in the appropriate folder in Google Drive (Video Crew / library_projector / write the date of the meeting / download here)
- notify attendees about the event in advance through various advertisements (advertising department)
-

d) Holiday events

Festive informal meetings are events that have a specific festive theme (for example: Pik-kujoulut). Such meetings, although they have a central theme, are nevertheless aimed at informal communication and strengthening relationships within the team. Such activities may have an evangelistic goal, but not necessarily.

e) Prayer evenings

Prayer evenings are events that do not require much preparation and are aimed at internal work in the church- to strength people in their faith.

Components of the event:

- welcome and closing word
- music
- prayer (personal or general)

To organize this event, you will need:

- premises;
- notify people in advance about the event
- Musician or music team;
- lighting technician
- music technician
- prayer (those who will be leading prayers)
- guards (responsible for security)
- Custodial staff

f) Leadership meetings

Leadership meetings are for team and home group leaders. Leaders can use such meetings to correct, straighten, or plan their team or home group.

Components of the event:

- coffee time
- main topic discussion
- additional meetings in small groups
- music and prayer

To organize this meeting you will need:

- premises
- notify all leaders in advance about this meeting (at least 1 week)
- meeting program (who is to be the speaker? what topic? what needs to be decided?)
- coffee / tea + small snack (as people usually come to the meeting from work right away)
- musical arrangement (live music mostly, but you can use audio)
- cleaning

g) General team leader meeting

These meetings are designed to make key decisions regarding the direction of the organization of the team. Meetings are held 1-2 times a month.

Components of the event:

- coffee time
- main topic discussion
- decision making (decisions must be outlined)
- music and prayer

To organize this meeting you will need:

- premises
- notify all leaders in advance about this meeting (at least 1 week)
- meeting program (who is to be speaker? what topic? what needs to be decided?)
- coffee / tea + small snack (as people usually come to the meeting from work right away)
- musical arrangement (live music mostly, but you can have audio)

h) Team building retreat

These types of trips are big meetings of either the whole organization or smaller, individual teams. The goal of these trip is to strengthen relations within the company of people who are in attendance. This can be done through joint events, seminars, prayer meetings, and informal communication.

Components of the event:

- coffee time
- main topic discussion (the format is selected directly to each team)
- music and prayer
- informal event (saunas, games, etc.)

To arrange a trip, you will need:

- premises
- notify the participants of team building retreat in advance about the date, time and place (at least 3 weeks before)
- check-in (if necessary)
- meals (food)
- retreat program (who is the speaker, the format of the disclosure of the main topic, informal activities)
- Custodial staff
- transportation of people to and from retreat location
- travel itinerary
- organizing the transportation
- notify participants about the things which are needed for the retreat (for example, bed linen, warm clothes, rubber boots, note books, etc.)
- music and prayer (live music mostly, but you can use audio)

i) Seminars

Seminars are meetings for learning. Seminars have a specific topic, which are taught by an expert in this field.

Components of the event:

- coffee time (no more than 10 minutes)
- main topic discussion
- practical tasks
- prayer

To organize a seminar, you will need:

- premises
- notify the event of the participants of this seminar in advance (at least 3 weeks)
- coffee and tea + cookies
- seminar program программа семинара (the speaker, the main topic, the format of seminar)
- responsible for cleaning

j) Conferences

Conferences are events for a minimum of 1 day and a maximum of 4 days. Conferences have a clear theme, structure, program and a large team. Depending on the size of the conference, its planning and preparation can take from 2 to 6 months. Also, the conference can be held in several parts for 2-3 hours each.

Components of the event:

- music and prayer
- announcement of speaker
- main topic discussion (could be in few parts)
- interactive activities
- performances
- food (coffee/tea + snacks)

To organize a conference, you will need:

- appropriate premises
- main speaker + speakers' host
- conference topic (title and main idea)
- advertising (social media + paper material) + contact advertising team
- equipment (sound, light, video) + corresponding commands
- clear program (minute by minute)
- event host (or hosts)
- food + team of people responsible for food
- welcome team
- security team
- musicians
- responsible for projector
- decorator
- if it is needed, teacher for kids and translators

IMPORTANT! Before preparation, bring your idea and main concept of the conference to the general event manager, and also get approval from the Head of Organization.

k) Camps

Camps are trips for several days (at least 3 days or 2 nights). Typically, the camp is designed for a certain group of people gathered either by age or by type of activity. The camps and team building retreats, have a very clear theme and thoughtful program.

To organize the camp, you will need:

- premises
- team! (responsible for food, responsible for transportation, responsible for living accommodations, responsible for household goods, doctor, responsible for all technical equipment, camp program workers, security, cleaning, additional people if necessary)
- registration for the camp (2, or better even 3 weeks before the camp)
- meals
- additional inventory
- clear camp program
- arrange cleaning

4. Practical Cases of Event Planning

“Designing and producing an event- whether it be a meeting, corporate event, fund-raising gala, conference, convention, incentive or other special event- has been compared to directing a movie, but is actually more like a live stage production. It is a high-wire act without a safety net. Once your event starts there are no second chances” (Allen 2009).

An example of organizing a General team leaders meeting.

1. First is premises. General team leaders are just 11 people. The amount of participants is one of the crucial aspects that you have to think about when you are looking for a meeting venue. Another highly important aspect in choosing meeting location that matches the goal of this meeting. It is very important for general team leaders in a nonprofit organisation to feel that they are part of a team or community, such as family. Therefore, in practice, such meetings are organized at a participant's house (take turns at each team member). This way, each participant is really able to share their life with each other and can make decisions in unity.
2. When you are ready with a venue, you have to think about date and time suitable for the most of participants. In practice, it is agreed beforehand that every second Friday evening at 18 p.m. is the meeting time for this team. There can be made some exceptions, that will be informed at least a week before the meeting. No matter the circumstances, the Head of Organisation is responsible to send a notification about a meeting in a team chat one week before the meeting date.
3. When everyone is informed, next you, as organizer of this meeting, should produce the plan of the meeting, or find a person who will be in charge of it.
4. On the day of the meeting it is good idea to make a roll call to know exact who will come and whom you will have to contact afterwards to tell decisions that have been made.
5. Every meeting has a coffee time, so it is necessary to think about snacks and drinks beforehand and prepare it for the meeting.
6. Usually such meetings start with a small chat and coffee time because most of the participants are coming straight from their work and if you want to keep their attention at the topic of your meeting, it is important to provide them with some food and coffee.
7. After 15-30 minutes, you can dive into the main topic of this meeting.

8. Usually this meeting finished after 3 hours. After the formal part of the meeting is completed, participants have 2 choices: they can stay for an extra tea or go home.

An example of organizing a multicultural conference.

If we take a larger event for example, it will be more complicated and involve different departments and moving parts. The last big event that I have planned and executed with my team members was Power to Change's 5th Anniversary Conference. It was at the Espoon kulttuurikeskus in Louhisali. There were 150-180 participants from Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Poland and Russia, as well as live-stream that captured more 300 views on Facebook and 400 views on YouTube.

Below I will show the basics of the planning process for this big event. Planning began six months before the event and it involved the work and cooperation of almost all departments and volunteers within our organization.

As with a small group meeting, the first thing needed to find and negotiate is the premises of the event. It is important to find premises with a good location, adequate parking, and that fits all of your needs. When you have found the best place that fits your budget and your event idea, you will then negotiate the date and time for your event with owner of this place and with your team members. In our case, there was a strict time frame for this event, because it was on our organization's anniversary- a date you cannot change. The event took place on October 13th at the Espoon Kulttuurikeskus in Louhisali, on October 14th at Kontula Metrokappeli. We agreed on the specific date and premises over four months before the event, allowing plenty of time to notify our guest speaker with the details of the event.

Since we would have a guest speaker coming from Ukraine, we needed to organize the accommodation and transportation for him, as well as the person who would host our guest. It was my responsibility as event coordinator to take care of these matters.

Once the place, date, time, and guest speaker were confirmed, the time came to create marketing materials to share. To begin this process, a meeting was organized to plan where we would market, who would be in charge of the marketing, and what marketing materials we would produce. The marketing team then began to execute this work.

Since the conference was going to be trilingual, it was necessary to organize translation from the speaker's language- English- into Finnish and Russian. There would be translation into Finnish from the stage, and into Russian through headphones. We contacted the translators two months in advance.

Since we wanted our conference to be visually interactive, we chose to use liberally the projector and screens offered at our premises. Our video team produced clips and graphics that would be used for the conference and its advertisement, as well as short videos used during breaks and info for the online live stream. The video team was also responsible for the production and execution of the live stream during the event, requiring a volunteer team of about seven people.

It was our goal to create a warm and welcoming environment for all people coming to our event. Because of this, we had a large need for a welcome team. There were four different stations of welcomers, greeters, and hosts. The first group was outside the building with welcome signs, directing people to the entrance, and creating the best first impressions. Inside the doors, in the corridor, was the second group directing people to the restrooms, coat closet, and the main hall. In the same corridor was group three, which was a help and info desk. Volunteers at this station were selling books, providing earphones for Russian translation, and giving any help that was needed. Group four was inside the hall directing people to their seats and providing assistance for anything happening in the hall.

As the coordinator of the event, it was my responsibility to create lists for each department's schedule and duties. This was a vital task for the organization of the event. Creating these lists ahead of time meant that each team knew exactly what specific jobs needed to be done, and by when these tasks needed to be completed. Doing this meant that volunteers were not coming to me and asking what needed to be done on the day of the event, meaning I was free to carry out the duties I needed to complete. One of my other tasks as event coordinator was organizing the volunteer's break room, complete with snacks and beverages, as well as organizing the premises and program for child care during the conference. I was also responsible for communications with the guest speaker and premises owner, as well as coordinating the entire production of the event.

As you can see, organizing a large event such as this requires preparation, negotiation, communication, and teamwork. But, no matter the size of the event, the most important part of the event is displaying the values and goals of your particular organization to your target crowd.

Do's and Do Not's

Dos	Don'ts
Do plan in advance.	Don't wait for a last day to plan your event.
Do invest resources and time in your team.	Don't let your team member do everything by them own.
Do be available for people.	Don't be indifferent to your team members.
Do be calm and friendly.	Don't be too demanding to your team.
Do have an assistance.	Don't be flashy.
Do double check readiness.	Don't panic.
Do have checklists	Don't take work to home.
Do sleep well the day before the event.	Don't put off an important call for later
Do meet your team after the event.	
Do regard your team for a good work.	

Possible difficulties and solutions:

1- A vendor recalled their services a few days before the event. First, you have to get compensation form it regarding what is written in the contract. Second, you must contact another vendor that could provide you same service in a short time. The last thing to do is to inform your new vendor about plan of the event and details, as well as inform your team members about the new vendor.

2- Technical problems. Sometimes at the event, technical problems with either the audio and video equipment or technician will occur. If you can test everything beforehand, this problem is most likely to be avoided. But what if a problem happens during the event? You, as an event planner, need to react fast and find creative solutions. For example, if you cannot connect electro instruments – use acoustic ones. If your projector doesn't work – find big screen, or few screens if necessary.

3- Catering brought the incorrect order. First check contract to ensure that the problem was not with your order. If the problem is not yours, then you have to talk with catering team to see if they could they fix this situation in a short time. If not – take compensation and order necessary food from another vendor.

4- Premises have ventilation problems. Use open doors during the sessions, make sessions shorter and more breaks.

Here is my personal selection of life hacks that help me organise my events without stressing:

1. Get a vision for your event.
2. Surround yourself with a good team. A good leader is not a person who knows how to do everything the best, but a person who surrounded by people who are passionate and professional in their field.
3. Start planning as early as possible.
4. Have team meetings regularly (once a week), and work fervently at your meetings.
5. Have team building meetings (have fun together)
6. Make separate lists for different teams.
7. Be calm and react fast. People from your team will look to you and in case an event emergency, your calmness and straight face will help them to not stress.