

# Planning Your Chamber Event



## **Planning a Special Event?**

Are you planning a Ribbon Cutting, Coffee, Afterhours, or Lunch & Learn? This toolkit provides you with the steps you need to take to plan your event!

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**When you are ready to host an event with the Chamber,** contact Reidsville Chamber of Commerce staff at 336-349-8481 or [info@reidsvillechamber.org](mailto:info@reidsvillechamber.org).

## **Step One: Date & Time**

### **Date Selection**

Selecting a date is a very important part of planning a successful event and can affect all subsequent steps. Before you make your decision, consider the following:

- Allow plenty of preparation time. If possible, give yourself at least three to four weeks to plan.
- Avoid holding your event on, or too near, a major holiday. If you are trying to attract a specific crowd, take note of their work hours.
- Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays are the best attendance days for community leaders and business people. Mondays are usually too busy to leave work. On Fridays, many people leave town early to begin the weekend, particularly in the summer.
- The Chamber will need at least ten business days in advance of a Ribbon Cutting so that we may have time to notify the Board of Directors and Ambassadors, promote the event and order the ribbon.

### **Choosing a Time**

The time you choose to hold your event is crucial to its success. An important step in the planning process is to determine the type of special event you will conduct.

Chamber Events with set event times include:

- Chamber Coffee – First Thursday of each month, 8-9 a.m.
- Afterhours – Date of your choice, 4:30-6:30 p.m.
- Topics @ Twelve – Date of your choice, noon-1 p.m.
  
- As a rule, morning events should begin no earlier than 8 a.m.
- Avoid scheduling during lunch hours, unless you plan to offer lunch.
- Early notice will get your event on guests' calendars. The Chamber will send out a reminder email a week prior to, and the day before your event. The Chamber will also send out reminders via text messaging, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.
- For media coverage, consider their deadlines before selecting a time. Media outlets will inform you of their deadlines over the phone.

## Step Two: Food & Beverage

Although it is an added expense, serving food and beverage is a necessity for a successful event. It is also a nice gesture that shows your guests that you appreciate them taking time out of their busy schedules to support your endeavor. Here are some helpful food and beverage suggestions:

- Morning: fruit, muffins, pastries, coffee, juice – a full breakfast is not necessary unless you are in the restaurant business and want to showcase what you offer.'
- Lunch: lunch-appropriate meal —sandwich tray, heavy hors d'oeuvres, water, tea. Don't hold an event during lunch hour and expect your guests to go elsewhere for lunch, unless it is clearly specified in your invitation.
- Afternoon: light hors d'oeuvres, finger foods, fruit/vegetable platter, tea, punch, wine/beer
- Water is *always* appropriate as an additional beverage; some guests may prefer it to the other beverage selections you provide.
- Serving alcohol at your event is not necessary but can be a nice touch (during Afterhours). Be sure to check ID when serving.

### Catering:

- If your event is a large undertaking or you do not have enough preparation time, you may want to enlist the help of a caterer. Caterers may also give you good advice for your event. Check with the Chamber for recommendations of area restaurant members that also do catering.
- If you decide to provide your own refreshments, be sure to have plenty of food items and beverages for your guests. Also, remember to provide sufficient plates, cups, napkins, trash cans, and other supply items. Running out of food is a bad way to end an event.
- If you are hosting a Topics@Twelve, you will need to make arrangements with the Chamber about providing the food.

### Step Three: Program Planning

Whether you are planning a Ribbon Cutting, Coffee, Afterhours, or Lunch & Learn, you may want to consider these points to help the event run smoothly:

- Speaker(s): Limit speakers to one or two at the most. It is tempting to let several people speak on behalf of your business, but in most cases, one speaker can represent the business well. Feel free to have several employees, owners, business representatives, etc. present for the event, but decide ahead of time which person will do the majority of the talking. This will prevent lengthy, rambling remarks, and redundant responses. *Prepare a brief (i.e. 30 second) “commercial” about your business. This is an opportunity to give everyone info about your company.*
- Tour: Many Ribbon Cutting ceremonies include a group tour of the building. Have a knowledgeable employee conduct the tour.
- Back-Up Plan: If you are holding an outdoor event, have a back-up plan for inclement weather.
- Camera: In all Ribbon cutting ceremonies, a picture will be taken for the local newspaper (by a Chamber staff member or the newspaper photographer). Chamber staff will do their best to take numerous pictures throughout events, so that they may be posted on social media outlets. You may wish to have your own camera on hand to capture the event.
- Door Prizes: A door prize drawing takes place during all Chamber Coffees. The Chamber will provide door prizes, but also encourages the host to provide at least one door prize to promote their business. For events other than a Coffee, the host will need to provide all door prizes if they wish to have a drawing.
- Thank You Notes: Be sure to send thank you letters the day after your event to anyone who played a key role in staging it; particularly those who took part in the program or ceremonies – i.e. the Mayor, if he/she attended and cut the ribbon at your Ribbon Cutting Ceremony.
- Event Formats:
  - Chamber Coffee – Networking 8-8:30 a.m.; Announcements 8:30-9 a.m.
  - Afterhours – Floating Event, 5:30-7 p.m.
  - Ribbon Cutting – Host, City Representative, and Chamber speak; Ribbon is cut; Guests network/tour facility/enjoy refreshments

#### **Step Four: Invitation List**

Depending on the type of event you are hosting, and the type of business you run, there are several different people you may want to invite or notify for your event.

Consider inviting these people to your special event:

- Current and potential customers
- Family and friends
- Suppliers
- Media
- Those who helped you get started: banker, accountant, attorney, architect, etc.
- Neighboring businesses in your area
- Representatives of the Chamber (once you contact the Chamber, we will send out e-blast and social media invitations to our members, Ambassadors, and Board of Directors)

*Again, allow plenty of notice to make your event a success!*

Predicting how many people will attend your event is tricky. Here are our suggestions for how many people to plan for at various events:

- Chamber Coffee – 30 to 50 people
- Afterhours – 25 people
- Ribbon Cutting – 15 to 20 people

*Event attendance relies on advertising by the Chamber AND the host.*

## **Step Five: Getting the Word Out There + Media Coverage**

Realistically, you should not expect to have extensive media coverage, but inviting the media to your special event is worthwhile. Be aware that there is a lack of people to cover every event, as well as a lack of sufficient airtime/print space to carry every story.

- Inviting the Media: Send your invitation to the news directors or editors at least a week prior to your event. Include a brief personal letter explaining some details about your firm and why your event is different or has some significance to the community.
- Follow-Up: A follow up reminder call or email the day before your event is always a good idea.
- News Release: In the event that an individual from a media outlet is unable to attend your event, you may consider sending a news release that contains the basics: who, what, when, where, and why. The release does not have to be fancy, just factual, and you may like to include a photo (with caption) from the event. (The Chamber tries to provide this information on your behalf, but we may need additional info from you).
- Photographers: Ask a friend or photographer to take a photo of the key people/activities at your event. This will make it easy for you to mail or email it to all daily, weekly, and bi-weekly newspapers with a brief, clear caption.

The Chamber will feature your event in our page of the *Greensboro News & Record* (Rockingham County Section) on the last Sunday of the month, following your event.

## **Chamber Services**

- Provide a mail merge list of Reidsville Chamber members for you to create mailing labels. For \$10 the Chamber will provide printed member mailing labels.
- Send an E-blast to our contact list to have members attend your event and represent businesses in our area.
- Post your event on our website and social media outlets.
- Supply a list of Chamber member restaurants that can cater your event.
- Supply your business with a list of your event attendees.
- Supply traditional items, such as ribbon and ceremonial scissors.