



Grand Opening Guide



Congratulations! You are already on the path to a successful entrepreneurial venture. This plan will help you arrange your Grand Opening event with timelines, checklists and press release templates to promote the launch of your new business.



Grand Opening Event Planner

STEP ONE:

Set Your Date & Time and Invite Speakers

Date of Event:	
Time of Event:	
Rain Date:	
Budget for my event:	
Master of Ceremonies:	
Speakers:	
My point person:	
Phone #:	
Email:	

STEP TWO:

Compile Your Guest List and Arrange for Invitations

Method (mail/email):	
Send by:	
RSVP Date:	
RSVP Contact:	
Identify VIPs: *	
Date to send reminder:	

STEP THREE:

Assign Your Event Tasks

Scissors/Ribbon	
Microphone/Podium	
Caterer:	
Photographer:	
Videographer:	

STEP THREE (continued):

Assign Your Event Tasks

Florist:	
Name Tags:	
Set-Up:	
Giveaways/Prizes:	
Parking:	
Greeters:	
VIP Coordinator:	
Tour Guide:	
Music:	
Teardown:	
Clean Up:	

STEP FOUR:

Spread the Word Pre-Event

MEDIA

Media to Contact:	
Prepare Press Release:*	
Send Press Release	
Prepare Media Alert:	
Send Media Alert:	
Post Event PR:	
Send Post Event PR	

SOCIAL MEDIA

Which/When	
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STEP FIVE:

Post Event Activities

Send thank you notes:	
Add event information to website, newsletter and social media	
Send photos/press release to media and Economic Development	
Input all business cards into client database	

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

[Use company logo or letterhead] [Date]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

[Name]

[E-mail address]

[Phone and Fax numbers]

Grand Opening & Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony to Celebrate

[Name of Business]

[Business name] has invited [name of elected official] to attend its ribbon-cutting on [date].

[CITY, STATE] – [Business name] is pleased to announce that it will hold a Grand Opening and Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony for its [newly constructed/recently renovated] XYZ facility [name of XYZ facility] onsite at [hour] on [date].

“We’re happy to introduce our latest accomplishment to the community and those who helped bring this project to fruition,” said [spokesperson’s name and title]. “The ribbon-cutting ceremony for [Business Name] marks the launch of a new era for [city name].”

[Name of elected official], [elected official’s significance to the business], is scheduled to be on hand to offer a few remarks regarding [Business Name] and to assist in the ribbon-cutting.

“We’re delighted [name of elected official] has agreed to join our celebration. Our dream of [constructing/greatly improving] this facility was made possible in part by [him/her],” said [Your spokesperson’s name].

[Offer specifics on your business facility, such as how many products or selection is available; how much the capacity is; what type and how much parking is available; and other details, such a amenities it offers, final cost of the project and public funding used. If the business site has undergone renovations, include before and after facts.].

[Include details on the ribbon-cutting ceremony, such as the names and affiliations of other invited guests, what will take place at the ceremony, and other details.]

[Insert other specifics regarding your business facility, such as its significance to the community, and any interesting historical facts related to the site, or other relevant details, make sure to include your company website].

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SAMPLE POST-EVENT PRESS RELEASE

[Use company logo or letterhead] [Date]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

[Name]

[E-mail address]

[Phone and Fax numbers]

[Name of Business] Celebrates Grand Opening in [City]

]

[Business name] held its Grand Opening on [date] and is now open for business.

[CITY, STATE] – [Business name] welcomed more than [number of attendees] at its Grand Opening and Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony held on [date]. [List of key contacts, legislators] were present to welcome [business name] to the neighborhood.

[Insert Grand Opening photo from event and add photo captions with names and titles of all included in the photo.]

“As a small business owner, it is great to see the amount of community support we had for our first day of business,” said [spokesperson’s name and title]. “The Grand Opening represents [the culmination of a lot of: hard work, strategy, etc.] and we are happy to finally welcome customers through our doors.”

[Name of Business] will be open on [days of the week] from [business hours] and is located at [street address of business].

[Offer specifics on your business facility, such as how many products or selection is available; how much the capacity is; what type and how much parking is available; and other details, such a amenities it offers, final cost of the project and public funding used. If the business site has undergone renovations, include before and after facts.].

[Insert other specifics regarding your business facility, such as its significance to the community, and any interesting historical facts related to the site, or other relevant details, make sure to include your company website].

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Grand Opening Step-by-Step Guide

STEP 1: Set Your Date and Time

- Allow plenty of time for planning, one or two months lead time is a good rule of thumb.
- Avoid major holidays. Take note of any government holidays and major sporting events.
- Check other local events by checking community calendars such as Chambers of Commerce and other business associations.
- After work events are well attended, as they do not interfere with working hours. The best time for post-work events is between 4:30 pm – 6:30 pm.
- Luncheon events are also an option, but the duration of the event is more confined to 1.5 hours, as the best time for luncheons is between 11:30 am – 1:00 pm.
- Avoid mid-morning and mid-afternoon times.
- Set a rain date in advance if the weather is a factor.

STEP 2: Determine Grand Opening Activities

- Traditional events include a few speeches, a ribbon cutting, and some giveaways.
- Other activity ideas include: a tour, sign unveiling, exhibits (blue prints, machinery, etc.), recognition of VIPs, music or other entertainment (radio station), a raffle or door prize (use raffle tickets to build customer database), prize displays, refreshment stations – both drink and food.
- Open House- Casual event which lasts several hours. Guests come and go informally and visit your business.
- Serving food and/or beverages is almost a necessity for a successful event.
 1. During the late afternoon or early evening events, light hors d'oeuvres or finger foods are appropriate. Chips, dips, cheeses, vegetable, fruit or cold-cut trays are ideal.
 2. At lunchtime events, serve some kind of sandwich or buffet meal.
- Think out of the box, what would make your grand opening different?
- Don't forget to check out the SWGC Business Directory for vendors who can meet your catering, entertainment, photography and rental/floral needs.

STEP 3: Select Featured Speakers

- Choose a Master of Ceremonies to welcome your guests and introduce speakers. This person can also offer remarks, thanks, and recognize VIPs in attendance.
- Guest speakers: contact them within the month to give them ample time to prepare remarks, set up a time limit for each speaker. Call one week before event to confirm attendance.

STEP 4: Finalize Grand Opening Schedule

- Compile a brief, written program for all participants with speaking roles. Be sure to provide recognition for sponsors and key people. Keep it short, one page is good.
- As a general rule, no planned program (speeches, etc.) should last more than 15 minutes with 5-10 being ideal. Plan your speakers order and time limit ahead of time. Have a set schedule. Make sure a photographer and/or videographer is scheduled.
- Sample event schedule
 1. Welcome guests
 2. Introduction to your company, your hours of operation and anything unique to your business
 3. Introduction of Board or VIPs
 4. Call up the guest speakers
 5. Cut the ribbon, usually by company head or dignitaries, or all employees, make sure to have the guests do a countdown and get the photographer(s)/media ready.
 6. Thank everyone for attending
 7. Offer attendees to join in any planned activities, tour, food, entertainment, etc.

STEP 5: Compile Invitee List

- A good guest list includes:
 - Current and past customers; Potential/target customers; Suppliers; Family & friends; Your Board of Directors or business partners; Employees and spouses/significant others;
 - People that helped you start – bankers, accountants, contractors, attorneys and advisors, and Investors
 - Fellow business people, neighboring businesses, business associations and local chamber.
 - Key government officials – Mayors, Board of Commissioners, City Council members, legislators, and the media
- Potential/target customers include those to whom your business wants to sell/provide a service. This type of customer should be the decision-makers who, in a family or another business, will decide to use your company's services. Grand Openings are an opportunity to highlight what is unique about your company to this group. Sources of target names include known customers, results of internet searches, and networking efforts.
- Develop a customer database. The database should contain customer's name, address, phone number, email address, and a column for the source of the target name "web research." Use this database to make cold calls, mail postcards, email blasts, issue invitations, etc.

STEP 6: Create Formal Announcement & Invitations

- Create an announcement or invitation (letter, postcard, email message or flyer) that can be mailed, emailed, or left behind for neighboring/local businesses to distribute on your behalf.
- Personalize any letters you send with the customer's name, if possible.
- Be sure to include your name, type of event, date, timeframe, and address. You may want to include your business card and directions (map) to the site of the event. Remember to include your logo and multiple ways for customers to reach you – office phone, number, hours, email and/or website addresses.
- Mail/email the announcement/invitation shortly before the grand opening (about 2 weeks prior). If applicable, send physical card first, then use the e-version: "Save the Date" as a reminder about 1 week later.
- Consider other methods to advertise the event: signs, websites, newsletters, Chambers of Commerce, client distribution lists, Facebook, Twitter, media event and online calendar listings, etc.

STEP 7: Prepare for Media Coverage

A well-prepared news release is the key to having your Grand Opening published in the local media. Be sure to include what is exciting and different about your company and a brief biographical sketch about the owner background and business specialties. (Refer to samples provided at the end of this document).

Compose a Press Release:

- Keep the release brief, preferably one page. Two to three paragraphs is sufficient.
- Make sure to check the local community calendar for all local media. Send your release to: television and radio stations, newspapers, online sites, Chambers of Commerce and any community-minded companies and organizations.
- The top left of your press release should include your logo, then the date. To the top right should be the phrase "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE," followed by the business' contact information.
- Always include the name, phone and email address of the main contact for questions from the media. Listing more than one contact is advised.
- Always provide at least one photograph with every release to newspapers, even if the photo is only a head-shot of the business owners. A good photograph may increase the chances that your release will be used.
- Be precise with dates and times of your event, for example: Wednesday, May 9, 2013 and 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
- The release must answer the 5 W's – who, what, when, where and why. The first four should be placed in the first or lead paragraph, the why should be explained in the second paragraph.
- Do not ask for the media to hold onto a press release until a later date. Send it when you want it released.
- Make sure your company contact, including the website, is at the end of the release.
- Add "###" at the end, centered and double-spaced, to let the media know that is the end of the release.

STEP 8: Compose a Post-Event Press Release & Prepare Event Photos:

- A post-event press release should highlight the Grand Opening and provide a recap of the event including the number of attendees, names of legislators/dignitaries that attended and event photos.
- Photos are very important for the press release after the event. Make sure several photos are taken of the same thing, in case there is a problem with the image. Save all photos in .jpeg format, with the highest resolution.
- Zoom in tight with photos for good reproduction. Newspapers usually print in black and white.
- Make sure to write down everyone's name and title before each photo, these will be needed to send to the media for follow-up.

STEP 9: Plan for Logistical Needs & Event Materials

- Materials needed for the Grand Opening include: all visuals, awards, checks, documents, gifts, product samples, gift certificates, etc.
- Signage— be sure to have signage identifying your location visible from the road. Make sure your entrance signage includes your logo and hours of operation.
- If you have speakers, you may need a podium, microphone and chairs. Ensure your company logo is displayed prominently. Chairs, tables and linens may also have to be rented.
- If the event includes a Ribbon Cutting, large scissors and ribbon can be provided by Southwest Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce.
- If the event includes a groundbreaking, a shovel is necessary.
- Think about adverse weather conditions - if hot weather is forecasted, you may want a tent or plan to move the event indoors.
- Directional assistance: use road marker signs with arrows or balloons to guide guests to your location.
- Decorations: flowers, Grand Opening signs, balloons, large display flag, etc.
- Registration: name tags, guest book to collect email address and fishbowl for business cards (great for future customer list). Be sure to have any materials on display to promote your business such as brochures, flyers or other take-a-ways.
- Food and beverages for number of attendees. Plan for enough linens, garbage bags and trash cans (make sure to place trash cans in strategic location).
- Plan ahead for any A/V equipment needs and check in advance to make sure all equipment functions properly. Schedule a run-through and set-up early on the day of your event to ensure functionality.
- Don't forget to check out the SWGC Business Directory for vendors who can meet your catering, entertainment, photography and rental/floral needs.