

# IT'S EASY TO HAVE A SUCCESSFUL EVENT

by  
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“A must read report”  
for anyone planning a special event!

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# Preface

**WARNING:** Please do not let the “Do’s” and “Do Not Do’s” in this booklet overwhelm, discourage, or frighten you. There’s never been an event that’s had everything fall into place perfectly. Most people, when attending your events never consider the large number of people that must be interviewed, contracted, and managed .... nor do they know the hundreds of small individual details that you must deal with, or do they think about the 18 hour long days you spent planning and preparing. You do all this to insure your events runs smoothly and without disruptions. Everything you work so hard to accomplish, when done properly, rewards you by making your job look simple to your unknowing attendee. Producing a successful event is like an iceberg’s structure. Your attendees see only the beauty of the iceberg. They never take time to understand the enormous mass that’s located just under the sea’s surface. The enormous mass must be there in order for there to be a beautiful iceberg.

They’re many details addressed in this booklet. The purpose of this booklet is to not to suggest that you must have everything perfect in order to have a great event. The purpose is make you more aware of things you may have given little or no attention in the passed. Just by being aware of these small individual details, and understanding how to quickly solve them, you’ll have more confidence and less stress.

The information in this booklet is based on over 20 years experience of working and performing as a comedian, speaker, and magician in almost every kind of situation possible. For more than two decades, every show I have performed has been audio recorded, reviewed, and documented as to what elements made an event a wonderful success and what individual eliminates took away from the enjoyment of the attendees. These audio recordings and notes were studied and compared with each other over and over. The knowledge gained from these records has been priceless. You have heard that we learn from our mistakes. This is a very true statement. But, learning from our mistakes can sometimes be painful and embarrassing. Why should we have to learn from our mistakes when we can learn from the mistakes of others? The information in these pages is not based on something I read in someone else's book, saw in an instructional video, or heard in an audio recording. This information is based on my own personal

experiences, my mistakes, my successes, and the mistakes and successes of event planners with which I have worked. I wish I could have found this information 20 years ago. That would have made things a lot easier through the years. I am passing this information along to you so you will be able to benefit. I can promise you and even guarantee you, if you will read and apply the information in this handbook to your banquet or special event, you will have a hugely successful affair, that will win you accolades and admiration from everyone.

Some of the entertainment environments I have performed in have been perfect and I could not have asked for anything better. However, many other environments posed problems that detracted from the enjoyment of the attendees. In every problem case, there were simple preventive measures that could have eliminated the poor conditions. In almost every situation the solutions were neither complicated nor expensive to implement. The purpose of this handbook is to educate you in the things that can take away from the enjoyment of your event and to give you simple and easy solutions to correct these problem situations. Please don't mistakenly assume that these simple solutions are not a big deal. Believe me, the problems will not "take care of themselves" and the "we will handle them as they occur" attitude can potentially ruin your event. Always remember that when planning a banquet or any type of special event, **"little things are BIG THINGS"**. If you don't do something to correct the small problems before your event, the little things will stand out like a pimple on the nose of a beauty queen. One tiny pimple can keep everyone from noticing the many fine qualities of a beautiful, talented young lady. The same thing is true in banquet and event planning. One little thing, like the food being slightly cool, the sound system not being adjusted properly, the lights on the stage being too dim, or the room temperature being too warm can overshadow all the big things that went perfectly during the celebration. Don't let the people attending your event go home talking about your nose pimple.

I sincerely hope the information within this booklet will help make your job more successful, more enjoyable, and more appreciated by your attendees. Now, go create an awesome event that will make your attendees smile and you a hero.

Best wishes,  
Glenn Strange

# It's Easy To Have a Successful Event

By Glenn Strange

## *1. ROOM SHAPE AND SIZE*

When you are selecting the place for your banquet, there are several things you need to know that can help your event be more successful. Many times when you are working with the banquet services at exclusive resorts, larger hotels, civic centers, etc. you will have options available to you as far as room size and arrangements.

**As a rule of thumb, a rectangle shaped room works best.** Square shaped rooms are probably the second best shape for banquets and performing. Triangular and circular rooms can pose problems, such as where to locate the stage so everyone can see and that no one will be behind the entertainer or speaker. It's best to avoid odd shaped rooms no matter how pretty they look. Trust me, on the day of your event, when it's too late to change, you will have problems trying to arrange everything in a circular or triangular room. Also, avoid "L" shaped rooms. Most of the time the corner is the only place to locate a stage in an "L" shape. This is like dividing your audience in half. The laughter and the applause will also be cut in half. "L" rooms are not impossible, but if you have a choice, pick a rectangular or square room.

When you are picking out your banquet room, pay attention to where the doors and windows are located, and how they will play a part with determining your stage location. I have worked banquets where the exit and entrance doors were located on each side of the stage. I have also worked banquet rooms where the swinging kitchen doors were on each side of the stage. I even worked one banquet where the wait staff serving the banquet in the next room, would walk back and forth between the audience and me all during the show. The distractions described in these situations will make it extremely difficult for the audience members to give their attention to what is happening on stage.

Avoid putting your audience in a room that is too large for the number of people attending. It's better to have a room that's on the crowded side than to have a room that is too big. Extremely

high ceilings are another element that you should stay away from if at all possible. For example, if you are hosting 300 people at your banquet and the room you are using can handle 600 people, your event will suffer. The same thing holds true if you have 50 people in a banquet room that is designed to handle 200 people. Your speakers or your entertainment will struggle to capture the audience's attention. The room will not have that all important feeling of intimacy. People will feel separated from what's being said on the stage. Their laughter and applause will dissipate quickly into the atmosphere without the help of nearby walls and the ceiling to bounce off of. Even the social hour and the conversations during the meal will seem cold and unfriendly. To help you visualize what I am saying here's an exaggerated example : Imagine if you were having dinner with 50 people. 50 people seated at 5 round banquet tables of 10 people each, spread out on a brightly lit, college basketball court with arena seats for 8000 basketball fans located around the outside of the court. Now do you feel what I'm saying? Try to pick a room size that will feel comfortable for the number of people attending.

## *2. THE STAGE*

**The performance area MUST BE on a stage or an elevated riser.** Do you think you would enjoy watching a movie if the bottom of the viewing screen was resting on the floor? The heads of the people in front of you would be in your way. The same thing is true with your entertainer. He must be elevated so everyone in the audience will be able to see and enjoy themselves. Most hotels and banquet facilities have risers available. If yours does not, you should rent a riser from a local rental company. Note: Be careful not to have a stage that is too high. A stage that is too high puts unwanted distance between the speaker and the audience. It's as bad as having a dance floor between the speaker and the audience. Sometimes a riser that is 12 inches high is better than one that is 3 or 4 feet high. Listed below are some stage and riser height suggestions based on audience size.

- a) Under 200 people ---- 12" to 18" high
- b) 201 to 300 people ---- 18" to 24" high
- c) 301 to 500 people ---- 24" to 36" high
- d) 501 to 1000 people --- 36" to 48" high
- e) over 1000 people ----- 48" to 72" high



The performance area should have a dark colored (black or blue) back drop drape located at the rear of the stage or riser. As an added benefit to my clients, for shows that are within driving distance I furnish a back drop curtain for the performing area. It measures 12 feet wide x 8 feet tall and takes up about 2 feet at the rear of the stage. Many banquet facilities have what they call “pipe and drape” available that can easily attach to the rear of the risers. Pipe and drape really make the performance area a focal point. People, props, posters, charts, products, etc. show up better in front of the solid color backdrop curtain. People and items on stage are more visible and easier on the audience’s eyes. The backdrop aids in covering up distracting things that go on behind the stage area, things like wall mirrors, sun light coming in through large picture windows, human activity, etc.. The curtain helps the audience to focus on what is happening on stage. If it is impossible to have pipe and drape on the rear of the riser, try to have the stage in front of a plain wall. Try to avoid things like wall hangings, mirrors, and wall lamps. Sometimes you have to compromise in this area. The stage location is much more important to the success of your banquet than what is behind your riser.

### *3. STAGE LOCATION*

**As a rule of thumb, the performance stage or riser should be located in the center of the longest wall** - not on the narrow end of the banquet room. There are exceptions to this rule but there are few. You want everyone to have the best view possible. You don’t want the people in the rear of the room so far away that they’re not able to enjoy what is taking place on stage. Access steps should be located in the center of the front part of the stage. Hand rails should be removed so they do not distract visually from the activities on stage.

Nothing should be located between the performance area and the audience. Many times people will place an awards table or a gift table along the front edge of the stage or riser. Here again, this places a barrier and an unwanted distance between the performer and the audience. Place the awards and gift tables on the sides.

## 4. SEATING

*This is VERY IMPORTANT.* The audience should be seated as close together as possible. The distance between the stage and the audience should be as close as possible without hindering the audience's line of site. If the audience members closest to the stage can look up and see the nose hair of the performer, that's a little too close. A rule of thumb would be to have the closest seats about 7 to 10 feet away from the edge of the stage. (That rule may vary depending on the size of the audience). Dance floors located between the speaker and the audience are a definite NO-NO. When you talk to people one on one and want them to understand what you are saying, do you make them stand on the other side of the room? No, you stand directly in front of them and only inches away. You want them to see you, hear you, and have eye contact with you. This is true when your entertainer is trying to communicate with the audience. So, don't place your audience too far away from the stage, or the entire evening will suffer.

If you must have a dance floor, there are a couple of things you can do to eliminate problems. One way that is actually better for the audience and the entertainer is to have chairs arranged on the dance floor in theater style. After everyone has completed their meals, have the people seated at the furthest tables move to the theater seating located on the dance floor. They will be able to see better and enjoy the speeches and performances. The performer will be able to connect with these people and the energy that is generated will quickly spread to the others in the room. This arrangement always makes for a strong performance. After the speeches, awards, and entertainment the people can move back to their tables and the banquet staff can quickly remove the chairs from the dance floor.

Another solution to the dance floor problem, is to have dance floor located to the far side of the room or located on one of the narrow side walls. The DJ or the band can have their own stage or riser located in front of the dance floor. This arrangement works out great for everyone. The speakers and performers are happy because there is no dance floor putting distance between them and their audience. The audience is happy because they are close enough to see, hear, and feel a part of the activities on stage. The DJ or band is happy because they have their own stage and do not have to worry about waiting for a podium to be moved, or for some performer to get his stuff out of the way before they start their portion of the entertainment. They can go straight into the music as soon as the performer takes his bow. The audience just shifts the chair angle

to focus their attention on the music and dancing portion of the evening. Another good thing about this type of room arrangement is that it allows for some of the tables to be located in a more secluded part of the room which is not directly in front of the music source. A place where people can actually carry on a conversation while others are having a great loud fun time dancing to the music. I have noticed that in this type room arrangement people stay longer and everyone enjoys the music more. The best thing is no one's complaining to you about the loud music, because they have a place to sit in comfort away from the main dance area.

## *5. BANQUET TABLE AND SEATING LOCATIONS*

Several times I have performed for banquets where the tables around the stage were vacant. **People will most always start filling the chairs and tables up from the back of the room** (like they learned in church). I have worked theater style seating rooms where the first 3 or 4 rows were empty. It is very hard to make a connection with the audience when they are seated too far back from the stage. Once people are seated they stay seated. Many times the client will say, "It's no problem. I will just ask them to move down front when I introduce you." NO, NO, NO, it will not work!! They will never get up and move closer to the front. Plus, if they do move down front as the performer is being introduced there will be an unwanted disturbance going on during the first few critical minutes of the performer's program.

Some ways to avoid this: For round table banquet situations, never have more than 10% seats than there are people. That way people will be forced to sit in the seats that are located down front. Typically, in theater style situations, there will be many, many more seats available than there are people. Not only will these audience members not sit down front, they will also spread out all over the theater. This is almost an impossible situation in which to entertain people. The room loses its intimacy and the attendees will be reluctant to laugh. When they do laugh, the laughs will be very short. For this situation, you should use rope, brightly colored caution tape, or even masking tape to block off the rows of seats in the rear of the room. You may also want to block off the seats that may be too far left and right. You will need to post a few volunteers or "guards" to stand with the tape or rope to keep people from taking it down. Young people are bad about this. It only takes one person to remove the tape or rope and the rest of the incoming audience members never know it was there and think it's okay to sit anywhere.

## *6. TABLE CENTERPIECES*

Table decorations and centerpieces should not interfere with the audience members' ability to see the stage. Avoid decorations that are too tall. Keep their height below the eye level of a seated person. Avoid burning candles, electric lights, and helium filled balloons. Tall centerpieces can also interfere with general table conversation between your guests. They must be able to have eye contact.

## *7. FOOD AND DRINK BARS*

**Locate your buffet and drink bars along the side walls or in the rear of the room.** DO NOT locate them between the stage and the audience, or anywhere in the center of the banquet room. These bars put an unwanted distance between the performer and the audience. Curved and "S" shaped bars look nice but they take up more valuable floor space. Food bars in the middle of the room make it extremely difficult for the audience members to see the stage area. Many times these bars have tall tiered levels, large food containers, and large table decorations (candles, waterfalls, statues, ice sculptures, flowers, candelabras, etc.). The attendees will not be able to see or enjoy what is happening on the stage. They will feel separated from the performer. They will not be able to focus on the stage activity. Their minds will begin to wander and they will start to talk among themselves causing a disturbance that lessens the enjoyment of all other attendees as well. The drink bar should be closed 10 minutes before your program starts. This will eliminate the distraction of people getting up and down during the program.

## *8. TO SEE OR NOT TO SEE*

**Make sure your stage area has a general wash of lighting.** Everyone needs to see well. Trying to watch a magic show, a speaker, or any activity in a dimly lit banquet room is like taking your family to see a movie and making them wear dark sunglasses. No one would enjoy the movie. As an added benefit to my clients, for shows that are within driving distance, I furnish my own lighting system. My lights are two 500 watt white lights (a total of 1000 watts). Each light is mounted on a tripod stand capable of being raised to a maximum height of 12 feet.

One light is located on the left front of the stage and the other is located on the right front. As a rule of thumb this is the minimum amount of additional lighting needed to make the stage area well lit and create a good focal point for the audience members. Good bright lighting is one of the major keys to having a successful banquet.

It doesn't matter what the banquet facility person tells you .... 95% of the time a banquet room will need additional lighting on the performance area. Sometimes the banquet facility will have track spot lighting in the ceiling. If they do, make sure the lights can be adjusted and focused on the performance area. Sometimes these lights will be located in a place that is not convenient to where you need your stage. Also, make sure all the lights are working properly. Because these lights require a very tall step ladder to adjust and maintain you will probably find burned out bulbs and broken brackets. Ask to look at these lights for yourself. Do not take banquet person's word that the lights are working properly and they are adjustable. Check them out well in advance of the banquet, because if the lights are broken the facility will need time to order the replacement bulbs and parts. Do not wait till the morning of the banquet to examine the lighting - that will be too late. Rent lighting if the banquet facility can not provide it for you.

When your audience numbers 500 people or more and they are seated at round banquet tables, you should use live video magnification camera projection. The screens should measure 14 ft. x 14 ft. or bigger. Depending on the number of people and the layout of the room, you may have to use more than one screen. These screens can be located throughout the room to ensure no one has a bad view of what is happening on stage.

## *9. TO HEAR OR NOT TO HEAR*

Always have a quality PA system that is adjusted properly - even if you have only 35 people in attendance. Think about it. You would not watch your favorite TV show with the sound adjusted too low. You would not enjoy watching a movie at the theater if you had to strain to hear the words. That's why when the movie first starts, you think to yourself, that the volume is too high. The movie industry people understand. If you can't hear the movie, you will not enjoy the movie. If you do not enjoy the movie you will not recommend the movie to your friends and the movie will lose money. Why make your attendees have to strain to hear your message?

As an added benefit to my clients, for shows that are within driving distance, I furnish my own sound system. I have two systems to choose from. The smaller system works well for audiences of up to 200 people. It packs down very compact and doesn't take up a lot of floor space when it is set up. The larger system is good for up to 600 people. Depending on the room layout and arrangement, I have used this system for groups of 1200 people. I also provide the client with a microphone and stand to use for their announcements and presentations for the evening. Providing my own sound system works out well for everyone. I know that I will have a quality sound system that I am familiar with and can operate, plus the client does not have the extra expense or time involved in renting a sound system.

**Most hotels DO NOT have a quality sound system that is good for both voice and music.** If they are one of the very few that does have a quality system, they may not have a qualified technician on duty who knows how to operate and adjust the system. Be sure to check with your performer and see what style microphone he will require. New microphone designs come out every year. As I am writing this handbook, my favorite number one choice is called the “Countryman E-6”. It is a wireless system that is almost invisible. It’s molded around the back of your ear and the pick up is located very close to your mouth. It gives you complete mobility and great sound without feedback. My second choice would be a small clip on lapel wireless system. My third choice is a standard hard wired microphone with a straight microphone stand (not a boom microphone stand). **DO NOT** let the banquet facility staff talk you into believing that their microphone, which is mounted to the speaker’s podium, is sufficient and will work great. You have never seen a successful professional speaker, singer, comedian, or magician stand behind a podium and entertain an audience. Just imagine how entertaining Shania Twain, Robin Williams, or David Copperfield would be performing from behind a podium. If the banquet facility can not provide a quality PA system, the safest thing to do is contact a reliable local music store, tell them your needs, ask for their recommendations, and rent one. Your piece of mind is worth the small additional expense.

## *10. ORDER OF EVENTS*

Check with your catering director to see approximately how much time will be required to serve your guests and have them complete their meals. A lot of factors come into play when figuring this - things like whether it's a buffet or a plated dinner, the number of guests, the number of servers, the type of menu, etc.. As a general rule of thumb, your dinner will run at least 45 minutes, and it could run up to 70 minutes. **The best time for your entertainment is directly following the dinner.** Save your awards, recognitions, door prizes, and gifts for last. Believe me, I know from experience. Your attendees will enjoy the evening more. Some people will be rude and leave your event early if you give the gifts and awards out before the entertainment. They will make you look bad when they leave, because your boss will think they were not having a good time.

## *11. TO BREAK OR NOT TO BREAK*

**DO NOT give a short intermission just before the performance.** People will not come back in the room on time. They will take a smoke break, go to the restroom, make phone calls, get a drink, and talk to friends. Some of them may not even come back at all. You will be the one that looks bad in the eyes of the boss when 25% of your attendees disappear in the middle of your evening's activities. A break will make your event drag and run too long. Don't even think about it. Trust me. You don't need to plan peoples' bathroom times. If anyone has to leave the room before the evening is over, it's okay. They will exit quietly and without distractions. Remember, the first few minutes of your performer's program are the most critical. If the show has started and people are wandering in from a break or if chairs are left empty because some decided not to return for show, the impact on the remainder of the audience will suffer. You want the show to be as strong and powerful as possible from beginning to end.

## *12. FAMILY AUDIENCES*

For family shows, the children are to remain seated with their parents. **DO NOT let the kids sit down front on the floor.** They will distract everyone and take away from the quality of the show. Also for safety purposes children should not sit down front on the floor. Kids have been known to get excited by what is happening on stage and try to get as close as possible, subsequently blocking the stage access steps. A lot of audience participation is used in the show and it's important that the participants are able to access the stage quickly and return to their seats quickly without having to step through and over an ocean of kids. Kids' hands have actually been stepped on by adults trying to make their way to the stage. Kids' will gravitate toward the edge of the stage, which eventually blocks the view of the people seated in the audience. Believe it or not, I have had several 2, 3, and 4 year old toddlers make their way onto the stage. They walk around looking at all the colorful props and picking things up. The parents just sit there and let their kids mess around. It is very important that you have a note in the program and make an announcement early in the evening, before the stage activities begin, that the children should remain with their parents during the show. **TRUST ME.** You will look like the bad guy if you send the children back to their seats after their parents have sent them down front and they are waiting for the show to start. This is a family show and the families should stay together and enjoy the show as a family. Parents will love hearing their children laugh and the kids will enjoy spending time with their parents. During the show several kids will be called on stage to help with magic tricks. The kids will definitely enjoy the show and they will play a major part of the program.

## *13. ROOM TEMPERATURE*

**Room temperature is VERY IMPORTANT.** The temperature should be adjusted on the cool side before your guest arrive. It is not uncommon for a room's temperature to increase 10 or more degrees just from human body temperature alone. Think about it. A comfortable room temperature is between 70 and 72 degrees. A living human body is 98.6 degrees. If you fill up a banquet room with 200 or more people you are generating more heat than your electric heat pump does at home. The room temperature will gradually increase without you even realizing it is happening. Before you know it, the men will be taking off their jackets and the ladies will be



fanning their faces with their programs. Even the small fires burning under the food in the buffet line generate heat and will cause the room temperature to increase. I know from experience that if an audience is the least bit warm the audience will not be comfortable and they will not be able to enjoy the program. Have you ever wondered why most movie theater temperatures are adjusted to such a cool setting when you first arrive? It's so the audience members will be comfortable, awake, and alert after the theater fills up with warm bodies. If the people are comfortable they will enjoy the movie, they will tell their friends about the movie, and more money is made. You're not trying to make money off your attendees, but you do want them to be comfortable, have a great time, and thank you for a wonderful evening.

## *14. MOBILE PHONES & RADIOS*

At the beginning of your banquet announce to your audience that they are **to turn their cell phones off or place them on the silent setting**. A ringing phone will take everyone's attention away from what is happening on the stage. Nothing will kill a joke any faster than having a phone ring just as the punch line is being delivered; especially when the ringer is set to play one of those terrible computer sounding songs - you know like "White Christmas" or "Yankee Doodle Dandy". It's just as bad if a phone rings when your speaker is delivering a serious message. It's even worse when the person answers the phone and starts his loud conversation with the caller. Everyone in the audience will focus their attention on the phone conversation. Sometimes they will stand up and talk loudly as they are walking out of the room. Believe it or not, I have had people carry on a loud, lengthy phone conversation at their table. It definitely takes away from the audience's enjoyment of the performance. Along with making an announcement before the event starts, it's a good idea to place a short written statement in the program asking people to quiet their cell phones and mobile radios.

## *15. WHEN TO START*

The first few minutes of any program are so very critical. It's in these first few moments that the audience decides if they're going to like or hate the entertainer. It's the time that they get to know the performer. It's when they develop their first impression, and you know how important a good first impression is. With that being said, **DO NOT START the program while the people are eating. DO NOT start the program while the dessert is being served.** This is a live performance, NOT A TV in your family room. People need to be able to pay attention to what is happening on stage. People will not laugh if they have food in their mouths, nor will they clap with forks in their hands. As a rule of thumb for banquets, I recommend starting the after dinner portion of the program when 80-90% of the people have finished eating. Start with welcomes, general announcements, thank you's, recognitions, or any non-critical information lasting less than 5 to 10 minutes. This way the ones that are eating will be able to finish their meal and then turn their chairs to face the stage when the entertainment starts. Please, do not do what I've experienced on more than one occasion, and make an announce that the company will be having cut backs, reduced hours, salary cuts, or loss of benefits. On 2 occasions, the association president read a list of the members that had passed away since their last year's convention,. Then he turned to me and said, "Okay Glenn, you may start." Also, **AVOID STARTING the program as tables are being cleared.** This is something that you should go prearrange with the banquet facility and have in your contract that the waitstaff will leave the room when you state your activities on stage. The visible disruption made from servers reaching for dirty plates and walking throughout the room, along with the noise of dishes and silverware clanking is overpowering and impossible for any speaker or performer to compete. This one 10 to 20 minute distraction, can destroy the total importance and mood of the event you worked so hard and long to make perfect.

## *16. THE INTRODUCTION*

**It is very important to give your entertainer an introduction** rather than just have him walk on stage and start the show. First of all it is very rude. It's rude to your entertainer and most of all, it's rude to your attendees. You would not take your wife or husband to your work party and never introduce him or her to your friends. You wouldn't tell your spouse, "I'm not going to

introduce you to anyone tonight. If you want to say something to anyone, you just jump in the conversation and introduce yourself". Most people think that the performer starts his show when the first word comes out of his mouth. That's not true. The show starts with the introduction. In most cases, unless the performer is a well known personality, it's when the audience builds their all important "first impression". So, the introduction is vital. It should be delivered by someone that is comfortable speaking in front of your group. Most professional performers will have an introduction written out and they will supply you with a copy well in advance of the function. This allows the person delivering the introduction plenty of time to prepare and rehearse for the event. Simply read the introduction as it is written. Do not add to, or take away from the introduction in an effort to make it funny or more dramatic. It is written in a particular style that works well with the character of your performer. You are only seeing the one introduction you are handed, not the other 99 introductions that the performer tried that didn't work well. As I said, the introduction is the first part of the show. It is written so that the last words spoken by the introducer flows well with the first words spoken by the performer.

If, for whatever reason, your entertainer does not provide you with an introduction you will have to write one. Here's a simple and easy formula to follow. An introduction should be fairly short and not drag on and on with boring details. Just pretend you are introducing the performer to a couple of your friends. Mention a few of the performer's accomplishments and credits. Mention something personal about him, like where he lives, his hobbies, or his family. It goes without saying that you should keep it positive. So, there's no way you should mention things like, he just got out of jail last week, or his car was repossessed in June of last year, or he has on brown socks with black shoes. Your introduction should start out slow and build to a climax with the performer's name being the last words out of your mouth. You should also encourage the audience to applaud. The applause is energy and it really helps get the audience and the performer in the proper mind set for the show. Here is an example of how the last part of your introduction should go. "From ... Spartanburg, South Carolina ... let's welcome tonight's performer with a big round of applause ...Glenn Strange." Remember, get the energy level up by encouraging the audience to clap, and then say the performer's name last with excitement.

And another thing, while I'm thinking about it. Please don't plan "sad" announcements just before you introduce the entertainment. The first time this happen to me, I could not believe it

was happening, and I thought it would never happen again. But, it did. In fact it has happened many times. The first time it happened, the person stepped up to the microphone and started reading my introduction. Then he just stopped half way through. He said, "You may have noticed old Bill is not with us tonight. Well, he's not going to be here next year either. The doctors told him this morning that he's dying and only has 3 months to live. I went by to see him at the hospital today and he said to tell everyone 'hello'. He cried like a baby. And now for our entertainment." I stepped on stage and there was not a dry eye in the house. There was another time where I was to entertain for a college class reunion. A man got up and read the names of the classmates that had passed away since graduation, and then he went straight into my introduction.

I mention these two stories because similar instances have happened to me many times. What are these people thinking? Announcements like these two put a damper on the whole evening and bring everyone's energy level down. Not only are they bad for the entertainer, they are bad for the entire success of the event. Subconsciously people will be feeling sad and depressed, and they won't even realize why. They'll recollect with their friends, "the banquet was okay, but for some reason I just didn't enjoy myself."

## *17. INSIDE OR OUTSIDE*

There is no question about it. The obstacles of outdoor festivities (or programming) facing you, your event planner, caterer, decorator, speakers, and entertainment are tremendous. Many of the obstructions you encounter are not reversible and can not be eliminated or even improved upon. **If there is anyway you can have your event inside - DO IT!!!** I understand that in some cases, because of the type event (fireworks, auto shows, boating shows, kite flying) or the number of people attending, the event has to be held outside. But, believe me, please believe me, your event will be much more enjoyable for your attendees, less expensive, and a lot less work on you and everyone involved if it is held inside.

One of the biggest problems of an outside event, from an entertainers' point of view, is that it's extremely hard to capture an audience's undivided attention. It's difficult to create a sense of intimacy. There is a feeling of distance that comes between the audience and the person

delivering the message or performing. I'm sure you have heard that laughter and applause are contagious. In an outside environment the laughter and applause that are started by a few has a hard time spreading to others. Because the audience is, so to speak, sitting in the wide open spaces with no ceiling or walls, the sound of laughter and applause quickly dissipates into thin air. Whereas, if they were inside, the sound of the first people laughing and applauding would immediately bounce off the ceiling and returning into the crowd to generate more laughter and applause from other audience members.

Remember, your outside event will never be as strong or as meaningful as an event held inside. If you must to have your event outside, and there is absolutely no way under the sun to have your event inside, here are a few steps you can take to help things go better.

Sometimes it is possible to have part of your event outside and part inside. You can conduct the necessary activities outside and then move everyone inside to enjoy events like dining, awards presentations, gifts, speeches and entertainment.

Another possibility to help make your outside event more enjoyable is to rent a large tent. Many resorts and rental companies offer high quality functional tent for outside occasions. A white colored tent is best because the reflective color will brighten up the area under the tent while blocking out the unwanted heat and harmful sun rays. The temperature will be cooler under the white tent verses a dark colored tent that actual soaks up the sun's heat. Tents are available with side walls that can be rolled up for better cross ventilation. The sides can also be lowered to block the sunlight and the wind. They also help keep the rain water from splashing in the tent as it rolls of the top. I have worked events where heating systems were used inside the tent for cold and or rainy, damp weather situations. Also, air conditioning can be added to make things comfortable for your attendees for those hot summer events. Sometimes these heating and air conditioning systems can be very loud and they must be turned off during the speeches and entertainment portion of your program. If you have a very large number of people attending your outside event you may require two or more adjoining tents.

Always have seating available for your attendees while your speeches and the entertainment are going on. You don't want them standing for over 20 minutes. Remember, it's not comfortable sitting on the hard ground without back support.

Many of the seating arrangement rules for an inside banquet room situation must also be followed for outside functions. Just like in an inside banquet situation the entertainment has to be on a riser or a stage. Locate your stage so the setting sun will not be shining directly into the eyes of the audience. There is no way an audience can be entertained if they are having to squint their watering eyes and hold their hands up to block the sunlight from their faces. It's better to have the stage located so the sun will set to the side of the audience. If that's not possible locate the stage so the people on stage will be the ones with the sun in their eyes. Professional entertainers are accustomed to bright lights in their eyes and they should be able to deal with the situation better than the audience members. Plus, there are more people in the audience than on stage. Remember, do everything you can to ensure the audience is as comfortable as possible and the event will go better.

Stage lighting is another area that you don't want to overlook. Even if your function is under a tent in the daytime you will probably need additional stage lighting, especially if the tent is a dark color or it's a very heavy overcast or rainy day. It's important to have a back drop on the rear of the stage to make certain the audience is not distracted by the activities going on directly behind and in the distance of the stage area. Remember the back drop will have to be constructed of something substantial, not like a cloth curtain which can be used on the inside. Wind and even the slightest breeze will affect a cloth backdrop curtain in a negative way. A professional staging company is the best way to ensure you have a stage that is safe and gives you the best arrangement for your situation.

Keep in mind that you will require a powerful PA system for your outside function. It takes a lot more powerful PA for an outside show than it does for an inside show. Here again, the sound dissipates very quickly into the open atmosphere - no walls or ceiling for the sound to be captured in or bounce off. Even a steady wind can actually blow the sound away from the audience. Remember, you will need wind screens over the microphones to reduce the wind noise. If you are thinking that you will just be able to move your inside PA outside to handle the

job, you had better make sure your system is powerful enough for an outside event. Most likely it is not. Because you will be using a powerful PA system, you may be disturbing nearby neighbors or businesses. Outside conditions sometimes enable the PA sound to travel for quite some distance. I'm sure we have all experienced hearing a public address system from a football, baseball and other sporting events that might be as far away as a mile. Now, most likely you will not need a PA system as big as the one used for your favorite college football team's stadium, but just keep in mind, an outside event will require a powerful PA system. If you are unsure about your PA system you should check with a qualified professional sound rental company. Find one that is honest so he won't rent you something that you do not need. Just a note - small wireless clip on lapel type microphones do not work well outside. Standard hard wired hand held microphones or the "Countryman E-6" are the most dependable microphones for the outside environment.

Here are a few things to keep in mind before you make the final decision to have your event outside: people sweating from the heat, people shivering from the cold, being wet and damp from the rain, mud puddles, wind, snow, ice, humidity, lightning storms, dogs, cats, bees, insects, mosquitoes, gnats, noise from low flying planes, nearby construction, cars, trains, trucks, emergency vehicles, and motorcycles. I know an entertainer that once had a major disruption in the middle of his outside show because of bees. It's impossible to get an audience back in the proper mind set following bee stings. I have had aggravating gnats flying around the heads of the audience members both during their meals and throughout my show. That night I ate several full grown, and many baby gnats. I swear I had one to fly in my left ear and out my right. I think he did it twice. It is impossible for your performer or speaker to give his best performance while gnats are in his eyes, ears, mouth, nose holes and other places I will not mention. In other words, you will not be getting your money's worth and you will be the one people will remember for booking the weak speaker or performer. I have had dogs wander through my audience during the middle of my show. I have had cats to come flying through with dogs running closely behind. I have had motorcycle riders on muffler-less motorcycles to drive up near the stage and leave their motorcycles idling during the show. I have had singing and ringing ice cream trucks pull up nearby and sell ice cream to the kids during my show. I have had props to blow away and expensive equipment damaged by rain. I have had 40 mile an hour winds blow down the tent I was performing under. Please don't think for one minute that the

negative things I have mentioned about outside events will not happen to your function. It doesn't matter if your function is an employee family picnic or an elegant client dinner served on the lawn of an exclusive mountain or beach resort. Things will happen. There is no way anyone can control all the elements that come into play in an outside performance event. As a performer, you just have to do your best to prepare for the things you can control, accept and deal with the elements that you have no control over, give a hundred and fifty percent, and pray.

**Thank you for making time to read this report.**

*Glenn Strange*

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