



The role of an Organising Committee

What is an Organising Committee?

A committee is generally a small team of capable people who each perform a different role but all work for the same overall objectives. You should never have different members of the team doing the same job or conflicts will erupt straight away. The members should each have clearly defined jobs such as...

- Venue & package research
- Fundraising
- Ticket sales & money management
- Decoration & colour scheme management
- Music, dinner menus & other inclusions

Consider a committee is like a political party. The electorate votes the party into power, then the party decides how to run the electorate according to what they believe is the best thing for everyone. Committees are the same. The school year group gives the decision-making power to the committee, and the committee makes the decisions for everyone.

The biggest mistake committees make is opening up decisions to the whole year. That is to say, asking the whole year what they want and getting them to vote on it as a group. The problem here is that if you ask 100 people for their opinion, you'll probably get 100 different opinions. This undermines the purpose of a committee. The committee should never-ever take decisions back to the whole year to vote on. The committee should make all critical decisions and simply keep the rest of the year group informed when things are decided.

If you understand that basic concept, then you see how asking the whole year to vote on choices defeats the whole purpose of a committee and kills any chance of a quick and appropriate set of decisions.

WHO SHOULD BE ON THE COMMITTEE:

One of the biggest mistakes people make is volunteering to be on the formal committee for the wrong reasons. You need to be motivated by the right things. Don't join the committee if any of the following describes you...

- I expect this to make me popular
- I'm the thriftiest shopper and always get the cheapest prices
- I prefer to be in control most of the time
- I know what's best for everyone else
- I plan parties all the time so I'm the most qualified

Believe it or not, these are the most powerful reasons why you SHOULD NOT be on the committee. If you think this will make you popular, guess again! The formal will only take place after lots of very tough decisions are made. No decision is going to keep everyone happy all of the time so no matter which way things go, one decision or another will be unpopular with at least someone. You can't let that be your motivation. Remember, it's not about your feelings, it's about the whole year having the best possible night they can.

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The role of an Organising Committee (cont'd...)

Being thrifty is OK but if you base your most important decisions on price alone, you're going to have the cheapest, nastiest, most unglamorous event on offer. The difference between a Budget formal and a Premium formal can be as little as the cost of a cup of coffee but the point is that you shouldn't be shopping on "price", as much as "value".

Being a "control freak" is simply the fastest way to create conflict with other committee members and all of a sudden, the decisions and planning are going nowhere.

Previous event planning experience is no qualification for arranging a formal. Believe it or not, formals are far more difficult and complex to plan than weddings for a variety of reasons. Being a good party-planner is not an instant recipe for success.

DECISION MAKING & FEUDING COMMITTEES:

This is one of the most frustrating aspects of planning a formal. The issue of in-fighting within committees and how to make those critical decisions when decision-makers can't agree.

Committees are made up of volunteers, who are by nature, strong-minded and often opinionated people. That's a good thing because they're generally hard workers and people who get things done. The problem is that they don't always agree on the right course of action and things can get heated. This becomes counter-productive very quickly.

The right thing to do is make up a committee that consists of 3 main features.

1. No more people than you can count on one hand because this will limit opinions and conflicts,
2. An odd number of people so you can vote on all decisions and an outcome will be reached every time, and
3. An adult liaison such as a year advisor, teacher or parent. This can be either a member of the committee with 1 vote, or someone advising but without voting.

CONCLUSION:

In all decision-making processes, make certain that you collect ALL the facts so you can compare things fairly. Research all the costs, hidden and obvious, all the features of each package, product or service before you make any decisions. This is the only way to be sure you're delivering your year a final experience that was chosen based on choices that are really fair.

At the end of the day, common sense should prevail. Remember that this process is hard work but should also be fun.

FURTHER RESOURCES:

On the Prom Night Events web site, you'll also find an enormous wealth of additional resources that will be really valuable to you during planning stages.

Take specific note of downloadable fact sheets, Legal Compliance explanations, Information for Parents and Teachers, Frequently Asked Questions and multi-step plans.

We fairly regularly issue special bulletins to schools relating to a wide variety of planning issues and when we do that, we'll always add those bulletins to our downloadable fact sheets so you can gather them from the web site any time you like.

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