

Anatomy of a Failed Event: Where did I go wrong?

If I had a \$1 for every failed event....well, lets just say, I would have a lot of dollars. Events are cool when we pull them off, but is that all there is to an event? Not the good ones. When the pre, actual, and post event pieces come together, it's a beautiful thing. When they don't, we get called into offices, meet with budget committees, make volunteers mad, and possibly lose kids and respect. If we have a string of events like this, it can cost us out jobs. Let me offer sell you some Event Insurance. Take a look at your events and see where they are going off track.

Every event starts with an idea and that idea is either a good or bad idea. The problem with ideas is that youth workers cook these up in a secret lab in an undisclosed location. A puff of smoke rises, we cry, "Eureka!" and begin telling everyone what we are going to do and how everyone is going to help me execute my great idea. It's right after that great idea pops in our head, that we can start going down hill, and fast.

Failed events have one or more of these elements in common

- **We keep an idea to ourselves.** In other words, it's our event and not the groups. It is our precious idea and we don't want anyone else getting credit for it (see the last point)
- **We plan it ourselves.** We get so jazzed about our idea, we break out our Mac or yellow note pad and before you know it, it's done. Just because we have a good idea doesn't mean we should do it.
- **We promote it ourselves.** I hate making announcements. They are a necessary evil though, if we want to get the word out. But wait, what if the students, and your adult leaders were so bought in you could tone those announcement down a notch.
- **We execute it ourselves.** Because we thought of it we feel most responsible to make it happen. So, we wind up making all the phone calls, set up all the chairs, and call for the food. This makes us a stoke waiting to happen.
- **We praise ourselves.** I think the true test of any event is not how much we have done but how many people did it take to accomplish it. If it is something only you could do, it is possible that your event was too small.

Successful events have one or ore of these elements in common:

- **Start with “What If”.** Take your idea to various levels in your church, from students, staff, parents, pastors, heck, ask the custodian while you are at it. Not everyone will care but they maybe able to offer that nudge that gets you a better insight on your idea.
- **Pray about it, plan and tweak it together.** At your next meeting of students and adults, have a marker board available and do some brainstorming. Collect ideas and then whittle them down to the best ideas. Be sure to pray before and up to the event.
- **It’s everyone’s job to promote.** Social media like Facebook, Twitter, and other venues, make it easy to get the word out, but nothing beats a personal invitation. Put some invites in your kids and leaders hands and let them loose. Check out the Freebie Page on my website www.thediscipleproject.net for a checklist called How To Get The Word Out.
- **Students do it, you help them.** If the students own it form the idea phase you won’t have to do much but assist them. Let them be the visionaries and you hep them execute it. Let them book the band, call the speaker, set up chairs, order the food, etc. Assign an adult to each student or group and let them walk through it with them.
- **Celebrate the successes and mistakes.** Every event or group of events should have a debrief. Talk about what worked and what didn’t. Make sure to share the joy of watching your students lead. Praise will make them want to try again, and again.

Youth ministry is not all about events, but if we must do them, we might as well as do them right.

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