

GUIDE

What to Ask Before You Hire a Corporate Event Planner

4 min read

Hiring an event planner is one of those decisions that looks low-stakes until something goes wrong.

When it goes right, your event runs smoothly, you look great in front of leadership, and your attendees leave with a stronger connection to your brand. When it goes wrong, you're fielding vendor complaints at 11pm the night before your SKO.

The difference usually comes down to what you asked — and what you didn't — before you signed the contract.

Here are the questions that matter.

1. Do you specialize in B2B tech, or do you plan everything?

This is not a snobbery question. A generalist planner who does weddings, mitzvahs, and corporate events is not the same as a specialist who understands your buyer, your compliance requirements, your CRM, and the pressure you're under to show pipeline. Ask for specific examples of B2B tech programs they've managed — not just corporate events generally.

2. Who actually does the work?

At large agencies, you meet the senior strategist in the sales process and then hand off to a junior coordinator for execution. Ask directly: "Who will be my primary point of contact from planning through on-site execution?" If the answer isn't the person sitting across from you, ask to meet the person who will actually be running your event.

3. What does your planning process look like?

A strong answer includes: a documented workback timeline, a budget tracker with regular reporting, a vendor management process, and a run-of-show document. If they can't describe a systematic process, they're winging it. That's fine for small informal gatherings. It is not fine for your annual SKO or your first user conference.

4. How do you handle something going wrong on-site?

Every experienced event planner has a war story. Ask for one. The answer tells you everything about how they operate under pressure. What you're listening for: calm, decisive problem-solving, vendor relationships that let them call in favors, and a bias toward protecting the attendee experience above all else.

5. How do you measure success?

If the answer is "attendee satisfaction" or "everything ran on time," that's a logistics vendor, not a strategic partner. A strategic event planner ties success to your business objectives — leads generated, pipeline created, deals in room, team alignment scores. Ask whether they provide a post-event ROI report and what it includes.

Hiring the wrong event planner doesn't just waste budget — it damages your program, your relationships, and your credibility with leadership. The right questions asked early are worth every uncomfortable moment in the room.

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