



GUIDE TO RIBBON CUTTINGS & OPEN HOUSES

SETTING A DATE

You should allow yourself plenty of time to organize the details of the event. Planning should begin at a minimum of three to four weeks ahead of the actual event date if possible. This will also allow attendees enough time to respond and mark their calendars. Before choosing a date, here are important things to consider:

- Be aware of major holidays and avoid planning your event for those days. Also, if you are trying to attract bankers or government officials, take note of any special holidays when their offices may be closed.
- Try to avoid a conflict with major community and/or sports events. Log on to www.seymourchamber.com to find out what events are taking place locally.
- Consult the Chamber's online Events Calendar to assure you aren't selecting a date that conflicts with an established Chamber event.
- The best days of the week to get good attendance are Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Mondays tend to be too busy for most people to leave the office, and many people take Fridays off to start their weekend early.
- Avoid holding a weekend event. Most people have their own personal or recreational plans on Saturday and Sunday

TIME OF DAY

The time of day you choose to hold your event is also critical to its success. It's an important step in the planning process and helps determine the type of special event that you'll conduct. Morning functions, for example, will have an entirely different atmosphere and style than an evening cocktail reception. Luncheon gatherings will naturally require more food and beverages. Consider the following when making your decision:

- Very few successful special events are held early in the morning. Unless it is a necessity, morning events should begin no earlier than 7:30 a.m.
- Luncheon events often turn out well, since most everyone eats a mid-day meal. However, luncheons require more advance notice in sending out invitations. Many people schedule luncheon arrangements weeks ahead and they will need to be notified as early as possible to get your event on their calendars. If you decided on a luncheon event, the best time is 11:45 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
- Late afternoon and early evening functions are popular. This allows people to drop by after work. The best time for an evening event is 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.
- Try to avoid mid-morning and mid-afternoon time periods.
- Half-day open house or tours of your company are not advisable unless it's necessary or traditional in your line of business (i.e. hotels or restaurants). If you decide on a half-day event, be certain to have a designated time for a ribbon cutting or other special ceremonies to lend focus to your event.
- If media coverage is important to you, give serious consideration to their deadlines before selecting a time for your event. Contact the individual media outlets to determine deadlines.

WHO TO INVITE

When developing the list of who you will invite, consider the following groups of people:

- Potential/current customers
- Suppliers
- Employees and their domestic partners
- Representatives from the Chamber
- Key government officials; city council members, mayors and public officials from the district where your business is located. If your goal is to have a public official present, you may want to schedule that person first and build your event around his/her availability.
- Media outlets
- Neighboring businesses
- Friends and family
- Business associates

INVITATIONS

Once you have identified your guest list, here are some tips to remember when sending out invitations:

- Prepare a basic invitation that is simple and to the point. Make sure all the basic information is included: who, what, when, where and why.
- If desired, include an RSVP. This will give you an idea as to how many people can attend and how much food/beverages to have on hand.
- Allow a sufficient amount of time for guests to return their reply. A week to 10 days is sufficient for most events, although two weeks would be preferable.

- Be sure to include a good map or very clear directions on how to get to your event. A street address alone is not sufficient.
- Identify parking areas for your guests.
- Indicate in your invitation whether the event is casual, semi-formal/business attire or formal.
- If spouses or other guests are also invited, indicate that as well.

FOOD & BEVERAGES

Hors d'oeuvres and beverages are typically served, but it is your decision. When planning for food, it is important to make time-appropriate selections. Here are some helpful ideas when it comes to planning a menu:

- For morning events, coffee, juices, fruit and pastries are common. A full breakfast is not necessary.
- At luncheon functions, serve some kind of sandwich or buffet meal. Keep in mind that guests attending a noon event are spending their lunch hour with you.
- During the late afternoon or early evening events, light hors d'oeuvres or finger foods are appropriate. Chips, dips, cheeses, vegetable plates or cold-cut meat trays are perfect.
- If you choose to have a formal dinner or late evening party, make it exceptionally nice. If you are asking people to spend most of their evening at your event, they deserve something special.
- Serving alcohol: the only times alcoholic beverages are advisable are for late afternoon or evenings. Beer and wine are sometimes served at luncheon gatherings, but alcohol is seldom served at morning events. Remember to provide some non-alcoholic beverages for guests who don't drink. (Check with your insurance agent about host liability).
- Many people choose to enlist the help of a caterer for larger events. Check with the Chamber or visit the [online Business Directory](#) for a list of our catering members.
- If you do decide to provide your own refreshments, be sure to have an ample amount of food and beverages for your guests, as well as sufficient plates, cups, napkins, trash cans and other supply items.

PLANNING A PROGRAM/CEREMONY

Whether you're staging a groundbreaking or a ribbon cutting for your company, it adds a nice touch to an event to have a brief program of some kind. It provides not only valuable recognition for you and your key people but also makes the event more purposeful, and allows you to explain more about your business. Consider these suggestions when planning your program or formal ceremony:

- People generally anticipate spending no more than about a half hour at a ribbon cutting or grand opening ceremony, so plan your event agenda accordingly.
- Limit the number of speakers and the length of their speeches. Overall 10 minutes total is long enough for the speech portion of the ceremony. To help keep the program flowing smoothly, set a time limit for everyone asked to participate in the program. Be sure to give each of your speakers a call the day before the event as a reminder.
- Any group of 50 or less usually does not need a microphone system. More than 50 people usually requires voice amplification. A podium or lectern is often helpful to speakers.
- Conclude your program with the appropriate ceremonial or symbolic activity to commemorate the event: a ribbon cutting for a grand opening or shoveling the first load of dirt for a groundbreaking. These activities let guests know the formal program is over and they also create good photo opportunities.
- If your event includes an open house or tour of your facilities, be sure friendly and knowledgeable employees conduct group tours. Unguided self-tours by your guests are not nearly as valuable as guided tours.
- Consider having some kind of door prize or drawing as part of your program. Winning a sample of your product, a free trip for two or dinner at a nice restaurant can add to your guests' enjoyment and builds attendance.
- If holding an outdoor event, always have a backup plan in case of bad weather.
- Send thank-you letters the day after your event to anyone who played a key role in staging it, particularly those who took part in the official program. If you collected names and addresses of guests who attended, consider sending out a thank-you note to them as well.

MEDIA COVERAGE

Do not rely on the media to give coverage to your special event. There are many ribbon cuttings and groundbreakings. They can't cover all of them. The media may not find a ribbon cutting "newsworthy" enough to cover. The following are some concrete things you can do to increase the chances of getting more media coverage for your event:

- Send a press release to the news directors or business editors at least 10 days ahead of your event. A day or two prior to the event, follow up with a media alert outlining the who, what, where, when, why and how of the event. Always remember to include the address of where the event is taking place and be specific on the time.
- Have a camera and photographer on hand so that, if the media was not able to attend your event, you can email a follow-up press release (with photo) stating that your event took place. It is also good to use for your internal and

trade/industry communications. The Chamber, if invited, can take a photo as well and send to you.

CHAMBER RESOURCES

Membership List

If you would like to invite fellow Chamber member businesses, you can request a membership list. It contains all active Chamber members, the main contact at that company, address and phone number. Secondary contacts can be requested as well. Due to proprietary reasons, email addresses are not published. Membership lists are complimentary to Chamber members and provided in an Excel format.

Elected Officials

Contact us for information.

Post Your Event on Member Events Calendar

Make sure to post your event on the Member Events section of the Chamber website.

WHAT WE PROVIDE YOU AT THE EVENT

The Chamber will make every attempt to ensure that Chamber representation is present at your event. Notify Events Coordinator Sasha Norman, 812.522.3681, at least two weeks prior to your event so that Chamber staff and Ambassador volunteers can make plans to be in attendance. If you would like a Chamber representative to speak at your event, please provide more advanced notification.

Presentation Scissors & Ribbon

The Mayor will bring a pair of oversized presentation scissors to use during the ribbon cutting ceremony. The Chamber staff will provide the ribbon.

Photography

If arrangements have been made to have a Chamber representative present at your event, he/she will also have a camera. Digital photos will be taken and emailed to you for your purposes, upon request.