

Events – A Financial View

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For an event, there are 4 aspects to the financial side of things which should be considered:

- 1) Budgeting
- 2) Reservations
- 3) At the Event – collecting money and paying expenses
- 4) After the Event - completing the event report

This article is intended to give guidance and some hints and tips based on my experience of doing the above for a number of events.

Budgeting

The starting point for any budgeting should be the aim that your event breaks even. It's best to take a pessimistic view on the number of attendees, initially and base your budget around a worse case scenario - if you get lots of bookings you can expand the scope but if you aim too high and only get a handful of people then you end up cancelling or losing money, both of which are bad. If the event is something that runs every year, then base your initial estimate of attendee numbers on the previous 3 or 4 years numbers. If it is a new event, then see if you can find out the number of people who have attended similar events in the past – talk to people you know who have run events, or to the regional or Kingdom exchequers who keep records of reported numbers of attendees at all the events. For Kingdom level events such as Coronation or University, good assumptions to make are 60-80 for University and 80 -150 for Coronation, 80-120 for Crown Tourney. More local events may only get 20-40 attendees. Of course numbers will vary depending on location (period locations are always more popular), whether Royalty is attending, whether something is going to happen (e.g. a knighting or similar), and the theme of the event.

Once you have found your site and confirmed costs and booking conditions (if possible get written confirmation of the charges), you have the basis for working out your budget. In order to get site costs per person take the costs of the site and divide this by the minimum number of people you expect to attend. Note that for scout camps very often there is an element of cost for the site, then an additional charge per person which varies depending on whether that person is using a bunk or camping. This charge per person needs to be included in the site cost per person. Also remember that for Coronation and Crown Tourney you must charge a non-member surcharge of £2/3Euros for each non-member who attends (this does not apply to events run by affiliate organisations e.g. Nordmark and Aarnimetsä)

Now you need to consider what meals you are going to provide and the costs associated with them. As a rough guide, I would allow £1-£2 per person/meal for Friday night meal, breakfast on Saturday/Sunday and Saturday lunch and £6-£10 for the feast depending on how elaborate it is. This gives an overall allowance for food of £10 - £18 per person.

Lastly you need to consider what other expenses may be involved. For example have you decided to hire a marquee for the feast because the hall isn't big enough; are you

hiring showers/toilets because the site has no facilities etc – remember also that you may need to buy toilet paper, cleaning items, rubbish sacks, string, rope and other bits and pieces. Whatever figure you come up with here, also needs to be divided between your minimum number of attendees to get a cost per person.

Reservations

For each event a reservation steward should be appointed to keep a record of who is registered for the event and to collect the money. From my own experience, I have found it easier if the reservations steward is also the Shire Exchequer, as they can then pay any cheques for registrations straight in to the Shire bank account. Try to encourage people to pay before the event because this gives you a pool of money to cover expenses before the event, and also ensures that you are not left out of pocket if people book but don't turn up. Once you start receiving payments, make sure you deposit cheques in the Shire bank account in a timely manner – certainly within a month of receipt. People get very upset if you don't cash their cheque for several months, and they unwittingly spend the money on other things and go overdrawn when you finally do cash it. Also remember that if a cheque is older than 6 months the bank may not cash it (at least in the UK).

Once you start receiving registrations make sure you keep a record of all the people who have registered and who has paid what amount, and also all the expenses paid out, including the receipts for these. I personally use Excel for this which makes it a very quick and easy task. Think carefully about what you may need to know for the event and set up columns in Excel to make it easy to get the data. For example do you need to know how many beds have been reserved? If so have a column into which you can enter a “Y” or an “N” for bed reservations. I have found the following information to be useful for most events:

- 1) SCA name – if you plan on doing sign-in based on a list in alphabetical order of SCA name then DO NOT put in people's titles.
- 2) Mundane name, surname first so that it's easy to generate an alphabetical list for sign-in
- 3) Whether a bed is reserved
- 4) Whether person is camping
- 5) Whether a person has booked meals/feast
- 6) Any allergies
- 7) Email address
- 8) Payment made
- 9) Member or non-member

It's very useful if you know a few tricks with Excel for counting and sorting, because it saves a lot of time! Excel can count up specific entries for you – e.g. the number of entries with a “Y” against beds for example (use the “COUNTIF” function), and can sort data into order for you (select all the data in your spreadsheet, then use the menu option Data -> Sort and then select the column on which you want the data sorted)

If you need to contact people (e.g. to confirm pick-ups), bear in mind that people may not like others to see their email address. If you send out an email to many recipients you can stop the list of addresses being visible by using the “BCC” option – send the

email to yourself and put all the other email addresses as “BCC”. To do this in Outlook, choose the menu options View -> BCC Field. One consideration if you choose to use this, though, is that if the recipient of the message does a “Reply to All”, rather than just a “Reply”, then all those you sent the message to will see the response! To avoid this, but still minimise the work you have to do, you can use the more complicated option of auto-generating and sending messages in Microsoft Word.

To use the Microsoft Word method, you first need a list of email addresses you wish to send the message to. This can be a list in an excel file – the excel file should just contain the email addresses in 1 column, with no other data. Open Word and select Tools -> Letters and Mailing -> Mail Merge. Click on the option “Use an Existing List” under “Select Recipients”, then click on “browse...” to use your Excel file with the email list in it as the source for the addresses. Click “Next: Write Your Email Message” at the bottom right of the screen in order to move to the next step. Now type in your message, then click “Next: Preview Your email message” to move to the next step. Finally, if you are happy, click “Next: Complete the Merge” to allow Word generate individual messages and send them to each person on the list. I found I had to sit there and click OK for each message because by anti-virus software questioned each message, but it worked OK other than that. You can do more complicated things like including each person’s name in the message automatically to make the message more personal, but I’ll let it to those interested to work out how to do that! Note the instructions above are based on Word 2003 – there may be variations in how to do this in other versions of Word.

At the Event

Make sure you have a sign-in sheet with all the names of those who have reserved! It’s easier to find people to mark them off if this list is in order (e.g. alphabetic by either SCA name or mundane surname). Make sure you know who has paid in advance, and who still has to pay, and how much they have to pay! You need to get all those with a white membership card, or who are non-members, to sign a waiver. It’s often easier just to get all attendees to sign the waiver. This can be done via your sign-in sheet so long as the waiver text is included on every page. The text is available at <http://www.sca.org/docs/waiwers.html> . Also make sure you have printed lists for everything – bed allocations, pickups/drop-offs, food allergies etc.

Keep a note of how much each person actually pays on the day so that you can check how much money you have collected against what you thought you had collected. Pay the money into the bank as soon as possible after the event, and make sure that the money is kept in a safe place during the event.

During the event, make sure you get receipts from anyone who has paid out for items for the event such as food or other supplies. Money should be reimbursed by cheque from the Shire bank account so that you have a record of the payment. If the payment has to be made in cash from event funds (this should only be done if there are no alternatives) make absolutely certain it is recorded in the event records, and that the recipient signs a receipt to say he/she has received the payment.

After the Event

When the event is over, you need to complete an event report. This details all the money you have received from attendees and all the expenses associated with the event. The form is available at <http://www.drachenwald.sca.org/files/exchequer/index.html>. It is an Excel form, and there are two parts to it. The first sheet should be completed to show your income and expenses for the event. The second sheet should be completed to show the number of attendees (members and non-members). The event report should be completed within 30 days of the event if possible, and definitely within 60 days. Once completed it should be signed by the event autocrat and the shire exchequer (or seneschal if the exchequer is unavailable) and sent to your regional exchequer and/or Kingdom exchequer. The shire exchequer should retain a copy along with all the receipts relating to the event.

Remember for Crown Tourney, Coronation and Kingdom University events 50% of the profit must be given to the Kingdom. For Crown Tourney and Coronation events held outside Aarnimetsä and Nordmark £2/3 Euros per non-member attendee must be paid to Kingdom so that Drachenwald's commitment to pay the non-member surcharge to SCA Inc once per year can be met.

That's all there is to it! From my own experience, I have found that it is relatively easy to sort out the financial side of the event and complete the event report, so long as you keep records as you go along.