

# Stretching your budget

One of the biggest challenges for an event co-ordinator is figuring out how to stay within the budget.

A little imagination and hard work can pick up the slack when the cash runs short.

For starters, use your connections and your company's connections.

You can really stretch out a budget by getting vendors and sales reps to contribute prizes, food or even help.

When cultivating business relationships, what goes around comes around and partners are usually happy to help out.

Finding co-sponsors might be the biggest money-saver possible.

Depending on the event, see if you can work a deal with local media to promote your event in exchange for a chance to market themselves to your crowd.

If you have a newsworthy angle, such

as a high-profile speaker or a political or social angle, that can help market your event, as well.

There are many user-friendly desktop design programs on the market you can use to design graphic promotions.

Most computers actually come with such a program as a standard option.

If you're a member of a committee, it's wise to agree on a limited number of people who can authorize spending.

This way, you know where your money's going.

Review expenses daily and keep close tabs on how they fit into your budget plan.

If it looks like you're going to go over in one particular area of the budget, you need to re-evaluate priorities and decide if you have to cut back your plans or if you can reallocate some resources from another part of your budget.

## Everyone likes a parting gift

A great way to get guests to remember an event is to give them a reminder of it to take home with them.

This is a fact that's not lost on business leaders and top event planners.

Companies spend billions each year on SWAG (Stuff We All Get) such as mugs, keychains, personalized pens and other logo-bearing souvenirs to be given out at events.

One such item is the Jagorb nail file. Made by a Calgary firm, the Jagorb is an orb-shaped nail file on a keychain that can clip onto a purse or brief case and be taken anywhere — even on an airplane.

It is airline-approved and endorsed by the Canadian Air Transport Security Association. That makes it handy for travellers.

But it can also be a special event piece for conventions or trade-shows.

Finding the right giveaway gifts for an event is a matter of understanding the theme and the

demographics of those attending.

Nowadays, the industry is always becoming more sophisticated — people are moving away from the traditional pins and notebooks that seem to pile up on people's desks and in their homes.

Instead, companies are choosing more "green" or environmentally sustainable giveaways, such as recycled paper products and biodegradable pens.

Perhaps the most important thing to keep in mind is to pick out your giveaway products early — particularly if you're having them personalized.

It's good to place your order at least three months in advance.

If you wait until the last minute, you could end up paying a small fortune for rush orders and air freight.

When it comes to giving the gifts out, the timing should make sense in terms of the event schedule.

If it's a bulky basket of products or several items at a high-end gala or conference, it's convenient to simply leave the gifts in guests' hotel rooms.

Otherwise, you can hand them out as a way to greet guests as they arrive or as a parting gift when they leave.

