



## Pippa's Guide to Finding the Right Venue for Corporate Events

It's interesting being a PA for many reasons. One of the main ones is that it involves being many things to many people. Whenever I start a new job I feel like a psychologist as I work out how best to adapt to the different personality I am now working for. At times during my career, I've also felt like a therapist. I had one boss in particular who liked to really 'share' and came to see me as a confidante for all areas of her life. Over the years I've also been nursemaid, sales woman, accountant, marketer and general dogsbody, all under the umbrella of the word 'assistant.'

Personally, I love the challenges that have been thrown my way. Being a PA certainly brings with it variety and no day is ever the same. I thrive on being methodical, organised and unflappable but also hope that, when required, I'm able to be dynamic, proactive and can deliver results in a short space of time.

Never are the above qualities put more to the test as when I am asked to organise different types of corporate events. Some people may not even realise that 'location manager' and 'event organiser extraordinaire' are part of the job description too but believe you me, they are!

You see, whilst much business is of course conducted at the office, the more high-powered your boss, the more different types of corporate events they will be a part of. And guess whose job it is to help organise some of them?

Over the years I have been asked to book venues for seminars, conferences, a team building event, the company Christmas party, product launches and once, even a golf event (I'm still not entirely sure that strictly speaking it was business...)

So, if in the future, it falls to you to suddenly add this type of work to your ever increasing 'to do' list, do not panic. Here follow a few things to bear in mind...

1. [Get a full brief](#)- No matter how busy your boss is, make finding out the finer details an absolute priority. If, for instance, your boss is launching a product, that could mean anything in terms of what kind of event they are envisaging. Are they thinking a soft launch for a very exclusive (small) number of guests? Or, do they expect an all singing, all dancing, well attended launch, with canapes. Their answer will of course determine everything.
2. [Budget](#) - It's astonishing how much different venues vary in price, from a few hundred up to the tens of thousands. There is a great website <https://www.tagvenue.com/> which allows you to put on filters etc and will provide you with a list of options which are available on the correct date and that fall within your budget.
3. [Size Matters](#) - Of course it does. There is nothing worse than attending an event where everyone is packed in like sardines. Book somewhere too small and there's nowhere to sit,

there's queues for the cloakroom and it feels claustrophobic and unpleasant. By the same token, book an oversize venue for a small number of people and the event could be ruined and feel soulless. The space is so important and must be right for the situation you're creating. So, check numbers as soon as you are able and scale accordingly.

4. [Think out of the box](#) - Business people come to expect certain things after a while. Conferences will take place in conference rooms, usually in hotels, (often with swirly carpet thought that's not obligatory). Boardroom meetings happen in... boardrooms. And so on. But, depending how much of a maverick your boss is or isn't, it doesn't do any harm to think 'different' at times. Your environment can totally change a dynamic after all. So, if you want to really impress clients, put some real thought into where you are holding an event. Use some imagination. You could book a venue which is relevant to what the clients do for instance, or one which is relevant to your firm's history. Or it could be a very 'London' venue if your guests are coming from afar for example. There are meeting/corporate event rooms in a lot of unusual places so do shop around. Of course, if you're organising a fairly large conference or away day, hotels are used so often for a reason. If time isn't on your side, then the advantages of being at a tried and tested venue are huge. They will be used to catering to every possible corporate whim and will also have any equipment you may need already set up. All that said, wherever you do end up booking, always make sure you visit the place in person to check it's as it appears online. Then there'll be no comeback on you if it's not what the website had you believe.
5. [The Early Bird](#) - When it comes to being a top PA there is no such thing as being too efficient or too organised. The best venues get booked early (ask any bride to be) so, even if an event hasn't been one hundred percent confirmed, it's worth starting to look into venues as soon as you are physically able. Get researching, start making initial enquiries, even pencil some dates if possible. Ensure you're not the person who has to be disappointed when your first choice has been taken.
6. [Not just a pretty face](#) - Being in a great venue such as a comfortable, luxurious hotel with beautiful grounds is one thing but make sure you also consider all of the more practical considerations too. If you book a place that's miles away from any station, or impossible to find no one will thank you. By the same token, book a business event at a place with terrible signal and no Wi-Fi and your name will be mud. So, make life easy for yourself. Triple check that places really are geared up to cope with the requirements of the event before booking.
7. [Equipment](#) - Do a checklist. What is required? Will there be a power point presentation? If so is the screen good enough and can everyone see? What technology is provided by the venue? If a screen and projector are required make sure this is set up and ready to go before the meeting starts. Is the furniture flexible? Can attendees move the seats and tables around if need be? You'd be amazed at how helpful some venues can be and how unhelpful and difficult others are. Always ask if Wi-Fi is free too as sometimes it can come as an additional cost. In my experience, these days there is usually always someone on hand to offer technical support when you can't figure out how to plug your computer into the VGA (or whatever.....) Be nice to them. This person is your friend and, if you're polite, you will get away with calling upon them multiple times!

8. [What else is happening?](#) - If you are booking a room, or a space of some description at an external site and you haven't got exclusive use of the place, always double check what other bookings they have on at the same time. You don't want a board meeting taking place metres away from a Greek wedding or a disco. Could be a tad distracting. Funny.....but distracting.
9. [Be there if you can](#) - My last piece of advice is that if you are in charge and responsible for organising a venue then if you can be there on the day you should be. That way you can ensure everything runs smoothly. I like to make sure signage is up on the walls so delegates know where they are going, that the food I've organised has arrived and that everyone is being looked after. If, however, you simply can't justify leaving the office; make sure the venue are one hundred percent fully briefed on the schedule so that you can trust them to look after everyone and everything.

Good luck!

Love Pippa xx