

## Notes from guest speaker visit 6<sup>th</sup> June 2019

Speaker: Rebecca Knight

12 years' experience as an Event Manager

Background:

The Guardian:

Focused on music and arts partnerships such as Glastonbury. As a partner, The Guardian had its own stage and tent called The Guardian Lounge where they hosted small up and coming acts and served tea with copies of the newspaper with branded tote bags.

Rebecca also led brand owned awards such as the Observer Ethical Awards

PlayStation:

Managed and led the event team for 5 years.

Produced over 70 events a year across Europe. The events could range from a trade show such as E3 in LA where the biggest gaming publishers showcase their new content to a consumer led show such as Gamescom in Cologne which welcomed over 250,000 guests to the show floor.

Rebecca's team were also responsible for all product launches including PS4 and PSVR. The biggest partnership Rebecca managed was the UEFA Champions League Final. As a partner PS had a huge presence at the fan festival. They built a three storey build hosting playing positions and competitions. They then hosted a VIP party for 600 guests at the hospitality lounge followed by watching the final in the stadium.

Netflix:

Part of the EMEA Publicity team. Focused on Netflix EMEA originals such as The Crown and Dark. The mission was to create publicity and social chatter for these new shows, build awareness of the Netflix brand and, attract new subscribers in the emerging markets. For 18 months Rebecca led and managed all of the publicity events across the EMEA territories. The events ranged from press days, red carpet premieres, after parties, film festivals and Netflix brand events.

Netflix events Rebecca discussed:

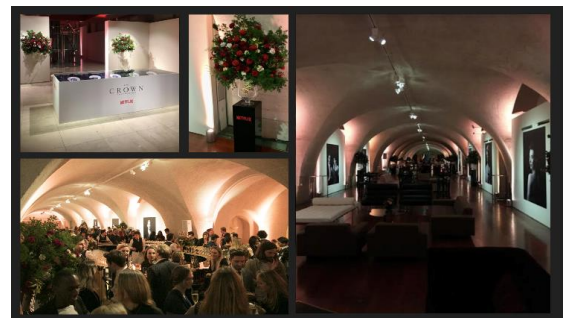
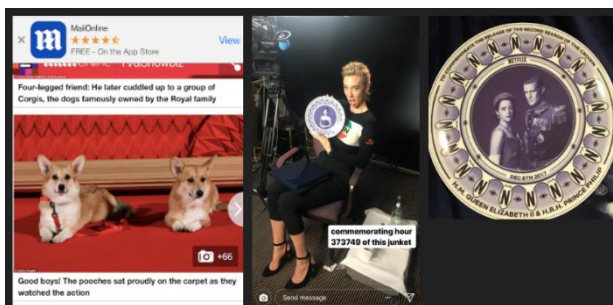
## Cannes Film Festival May 2017

- Venue was run down and had no power. Events team had to erect walls and set up electricity.
- Outside area: needed to contingency plan for bad weather to erected an retractable roof outside just for this event.
- At the official after party, the event ran out of champagne. Runners from the events team had to run around Cannes trying to find champagne but only prosecco was available.



## THE CROWN SEASON 2 PREMIERE (images below)

- The corgis were 3k each to hire and were the actual corgis from the show. They get travel sick so a Range Rover was hired so they could be placed in the foot well to transport them to the red carpet.
- The second image is of Vanessa Kirby who played Princess Margaret - this is from her snapchat account during the press day
- The third image is of commemorative plates that we produced especially for the premiere after party as props we also gifted them to talent as takeaways which they were thrilled with. They also generated lots of press attention.
- The image on the right is the after party which was held at Somerset House for 300 guests (which was a mix of talent, Netflix staff and press)



## Event management skills (based on Rebecca's experiences)

### 1. Organisation

- Prepare your documents
  - Attention to detail is VERY important e.g. spelling mistakes, incorrect timings
- This is absolutely key to any successful event. When you tell someone you manage events they can often think it's really glamorous and that you go just to parties.*

*The reality is that there is so much preparation and admin work that goes into an event. The more preparation you can do in advance the more likely that you will have a smooth running event on the day and will see problems before they arise. As you gain experience you will start to understand the general timelines of events e.g. book your venue 6 months in advance, a year if it is at Christmas time. Catering should be locked in a month before the event, Invitations should be sent out 8 weeks in advance.*

*It's easy to dismiss admin but even small jobs such as sending out invitations to your guests requires attention to detail. I know of invitations that were not properly copy checked and they included an event date that didn't even exist (April 31st). All 500 invites had to be resent out. Which was expensive and embarrassing.*

### 2. Problem solving

*Think of Event Managers as swans, calm on the outside but paddling fast underneath. You never want your guests to be aware of problems you encounter.*

*You will encounter problems. This could be in the planning stages or onsite. It's simply not possible to plan for every eventuality. As the Event Manager you will be looked to as the trouble-shooter. It is important to remain calm and listen to what the problem is. There is always a solution.*

*At The Rain premiere in Copenhagen we had used a warehouse for the after party 10 minutes before an act was due to come on stage and perform we had a power cut to the sound system. I delayed the performance by 30 minutes while the engineers tried to sort the problem. To keep guests happy, I sent more drinks around on trays and reduced the lighting to help the generator.*

### 3. Time Management

- Set your event date
- Project timeline
- 'Day of' schedule

*As soon as you have an event date set you have a finite amount of time to plan your event. It is important that you plan ahead so that your tasks are spaced out and that it isn't a big rush at the end.*

*Create a project timeline and plot out your key deadlines. When do you need to send your creative to the printer? How long will it take for your printed invites to be delivered to you? Try and add a few extra days of contingency so that if there is a delay you have a buffer.*

*As well as a general project timeline create a DAY OF schedule. This will include all of the timings for the day of the event e.g. 9am we have access to the venue, 10am we can test the content on the screen*

#### **4. Negotiation with vendors**

- Be clear - what exactly do you need
- Ask for a quote
- Review it in detail - line by line
- Call and discuss the quote with the vendor (always follow up with an email)

*As an event manager you will liaise with a range of different stakeholders. These could be your colleagues, vendors or talent. Remember everyone is a person trying to do their job. Be respectful and timely with your responses. I always prefer calling over email it is more personal and you can start to build up a rapport much quicker.*

*Negotiation skills are really important in events because as the project lead you often need to persuade people to do work for you or call in favours to meet a delivery deadline.*

*When I work with a vendor e.g. a caterer or printer, the first thing I do is discuss the needs for my event. E.g. how many people do I need to cater for? What style of food is most appropriate e.g. tray service or buffet. Once this is established you can ask for a quote.*

*Try to get a quote from a few suppliers so that you can compare and contrast. It helps you understand what the current market costs are for services. Which comes in handy when a supplier tries to overcharge you.*

*If you have any questions don't be afraid to ask the vendor to clarify. They may use terms you don't understand it is ok not to know everything. Being curious is helpful and may naturally lead to price reductions.*

*Think about ways you can try and reduce the quote. You can ask for a discount if you know that you will give them business in the future. If you are going over budget ask them what they can do for the budget you do have, for catering you could have less portions or maybe swap champagne for prosecco*

#### **5. Communication**

- Who are you talking to? Adapt your communication style
- What do you need from them?
- What form of communication is most appropriate? Meeting, email a phone call?

*As the project lead you will know everything about the project. You are the driving force and being a strong clear communicator will ensure that your team and external partners understand what is expected of them.*

*When I am leading a project I will set up a weekly meeting with key stakeholders to keep them updated and use the opportunity to troubleshoot or ask how their part of the project is progressing.*

*In life we change the way that we communicate depending on who we are talking to. This also applies in events.*

*If I am talking to talent I will keep it friendly and short they do not need to know all of the details as they have limited time and it is my job to ensure they feel comfortable.*

*If I am talking to a vendor I will call them and meet in person and go into a lot of detail as I am paying them for a service which I need to ensure is delivered to a high quality.*

## 6. Interpersonal

- Be polite
  - Take the time to build relationships with suppliers so you can use them again
- As the event manager you are responsible for the delivery and success of all aspects of the event. However you will rely on a wide team of stakeholders and external partners to help you deliver this.

They are more likely to do this if you are a pleasure to work with. Always be polite even if you feel frustrated. In events you will be multi-tasking. Deadlines will move, new challenges will appear. You will need to call in favours with suppliers. If they already like you you're half way there.

## Event management tasks (to produce a successful event)

Each event is always different however the skills you need to produce a successful event remain the same. These are tasks that I would complete for every one of my events be it a trade show, a talent dinner or a red carpet premiere.

Everything below in **green** is a document I will produce when organising the event

### PRE EVENT WORK :

1. Write an **EVENT BRIEF**- what are your KPI's? - why are we doing it?, who are your audience how will they find out about the event?

The biggest question is why are you doing an event? Is it to create publicity, to raise money for a cause etc. Agree what a successful event looks like. This could be selling all of your tickets, positive guest sentiment or sticking to your budget. It's important to be clear at this stage because when you come to review the event you want to be able to say if it was a success and if not why not.

2. Create an **EVENT BUDGET** - with a contingency

Create a budget at the beginning of the project. List all of your costs and your vendor names. Have a separate line for each item in the budget.

3. **VENDOR SOURCING & MANAGEMENT** - venues, branding, catering, tech etc.

This can be quite fun and is the research part of the project. Go out and find vendors you want to work with, introduce yourself get quotes, look at their previous work. Making key relationships like this is so helpful as you may need them for your next event and you should always work with vendors you trust as the quality of their work will reflect on you.

4. Create a **PROJECT TIMELINE** - include key project milestones, what is the date of the event?

The timeline is a really key tool in planning an event. I work out a date for the event e.g. in 6 months' time and work backwards. Try to keep it all on one page and list each task and when it needs to be completed by. The kind of items I put in here are when do venue contracts need to be signed? When do I need to secure a caterer? Are there any printing branding deadlines I need to consider? As you talk to your vendors they will explain their delivery deadlines. For example the caterer may want to have the menu locked in a month before the event so that they have time to order the food you can then add this into the timeline.

5. **KEY STAKEHOLDERS** - who are they? How do you communicate with them?

*These are the people in your team that have a vested interest in your project. What is the best way to keep them informed of the progress of the project? Could this be a weekly status email? Or could you make time for a weekly meeting? You should prepare an agenda in advance for this and try to circulate ahead of the meeting so stakeholders have time to prepare.*

6. **DAY OF EVENT SCHEDULE** - All key information for the day, delivery times, time of event, stage times, end of event etc.

*This is the timeline for the whole day. What is the arrival time for vendors, when will they be set up by etc.?*

7. **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES** - Name each key stakeholder and list their responsibilities, e.g. branding delivery, sourcing a caterer etc.

**ONSITE TASKS:**

8. **VENUE ORIENTATION**

*Walk your team around the venue and run through the day of schedule*

9. **PROBLEM SOLVING** - The Event Manager should 'float' at the event and be available to troubleshoot if anything goes wrong

**POST EVENT:**

10. **DEBRIEF** - Ideally a week after the event schedule in a meeting with all key stakeholders to discuss any learnings then circulate to the wider group

*It is important to be reflective, what went well? What didn't go so well? What can be improved in future?*