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# HOW TO HAVE FUN: THE THIS MAGAZINE GUIDE TO SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH EVENTS

**YOU'VE WORKED HARD** putting together your magazine's latest issue. It's finally back from the printer and all you can think about is taking a really big nap. But wait! Now's the time to celebrate the issue and show off all your hard work. Yes, it's time for the launch party. Who doesn't love a good party? Here's how to throw one.

Think about what your goals for the party are. I know, I know, goals aren't fun. Do you want it to be a *funraiser* or a *fundraiser*? Will you charge a cover at the door or pass a hat? Maybe you'll just be happy if people show up regardless of whether they pay or not. Most magazines charge a small cover charge (think \$5 range), which also gets you a copy of the latest issue. This not only gets the magazine into people's hands, but it also puts some money into your bank account. Everybody wins.

Choose your party venue carefully and make sure you confirm all the logistical details in advance. Is your venue easily accessible by public transit? Is it wheelchair accessible? What is the venue's capacity? Does it come with a bar or will you have to arrange all that yourself (think liquor licences, bar staff, buying booze)? If the venue is a bar, is there a bar minimum? If you're going to have a band, will they need to bring their own sound equipment or is that provided? Think about what information you need to get from venues and develop a standard set of questions you can ask each place. Think about a possible contra/sponsorship relationship with the venue that could help keep costs to a minimum. Think of everything that could possibly go wrong and develop questions that can troubleshoot this in advance.

Once you've picked a venue make sure you follow up with them in advance of the event to confirm that everything is still on track and nothing has changed since your initial conversation. Confirm set up times, load in times for bands and other details that will help make the event run smoothly. Make sure you have a name and contact information for someone from the venue for the night of the event. In case something goes wrong during the launch, it's helpful to know who to turn to.

Give your guests something to do. Standing around with a drink in hand is fun, but if you put out six issues a year you can't expect people to turn out for that six times a year. Think of fun, inexpensive things you can do to keep people entertained. If you're a literary magazine you could have writers featured in the issue read their

work (keep it short, please, I beg you). If you're a magazine of ideas or politics, consider a panel discussion related to something in the issue you're launching. How about a band or a DJ? The entertainment doesn't need to fill the whole party, but a bit of programming can go a long way to making people feel like their time and money were well spent.

Have a raffle or silent auction featuring items related to content in the issue. For example, for the launch of This Magazine's "Legalize Everything" issue we asked local businesses to donate things like bongos and sex toys that we could raffle off. It fit well with the issue's theme and who doesn't love to win stuff?

Make sure you tell people about the party. Spread the word as far and as wide as you can. Put up posters around your city. Use the free listings services in your local independent weeklies. Send the information to listserves and other groups you think might be interested. Use social media like Facebook and Twitter to get the message out. Call people you think should be there and tell them to be there. Make sure the folks on your media list get an invite.

Make sure you get extra copies of the issue printed so everyone at the launch can have one. This seems really basic, but you'd be surprised. Have a sign-up sheet available so that people can join your e-newsletter list or other mailing lists. Have information about the magazine and subscription forms available. Make sure volunteers working the door or information tables have all the resources/answers to questions they might need. You might want to offer people who subscribe at the party a special incentive price.

Have someone take pictures or video at the party that you can post on Facebook and Twitter. Once people see how fun the event was they'll want to come to the next one for sure. Send out a note to your e-list, post something on your Facebook page, tweet to your followers about what a success the party was. Make people feel like they've missed out on something so they'll be there next time.

Consider partnering with another magazine. If your audiences compliment each other, why not work together on a party that will be even bigger and better because you're pooling your resources and audiences. Remember to be clear up front about who is doing what and who is responsible for what. Nothing kills a party faster than disorganization or resentment.

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