

## Crafting a Vision

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If you organize something — a dance or music event, series, team, or group - you have the opportunity to develop a community around your activity, and to create something that will be deeply meaningful to those who participate. Your intention for the nature of that community plays an important part in its eventual form. Whether you are starting something new or have been at it for a long time, read through this article and put some thought into your vision for your event, series or group.

### ARTICULATE YOUR GOALS

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Here are some questions to help get you started:

- What are your goals? Are there musical, social, financial, community, educational, or other aspects to these goals? What would success look like? Is recruiting new/young participants a goal of your event or series? Is developing new/young performers, leaders, or organizers a part of the purpose of your series?
- Who do you want to participate? What kinds of people? What ages? What levels of experience? From an existing community (e.g. a campus or school), or from anywhere? From a broad or narrow geographic area?
- What sort of experience do you want people to have when they attend? What will beginners/newcomers experience? What will it feel like for experienced participants?
- How does your event/group fit in with others in your area? Are you competing with others, or filling a new niche?
- Does your event or group cater to young children, or families with children? Is it open to these folks, even if the programming does not specifically target them?
- What balance of teaching vs. "just dancing/playing" do you want? Is skill development an important goal?
- If your event/group draws participants of diverse ages, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic class, politics, gender/sexual identities, religious beliefs, etc., how will you create a safe environment for everyone and facilitate interaction and integration?
- Do you have an artistic vision? Do you want to feature certain styles of music or dance over others, or represent a wide range of styles? Do you have a preference for more traditional or more modern/innovative approaches?
- Is your event a fundraiser or a benefit?

For a discussion of this process as it applies to leadership training events see Linda Henry's organizer's manual "Make it Happen", page 4.

### PUTTING YOUR VISION INTO PRACTICE

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Discuss these questions with your co-organizers or committee, or just bounce them around on your own. When you have a sense of what you want your event/group to be, consider how you can make that happen. As an organizer you have a wide range of tools at your disposal. Here are a few areas where you have an opportunity to put your ideas into practice:

- Who you hire
- What you communicate to performers
- How you and other organizers act at the event
- What you say or don't say in your publicity, as well as where you publicize
- Communication to your audience through announcements, promotional materials, email lists, posted statements at events, etc.
- What you plan and how you structure the program of events. For example, do you schedule beginners workshops? Do you plan mixers? Do you allow sit-ins with the band? Do you arrange guest caller slots? Special skill development workshops? Advanced events?

If people in your area have certain habits that run counter to your vision — failure to incorporate beginners for example — you may have a special challenge ahead of you. Express your vision in positive terms, such as "at this event, we graciously welcome new participants by asking them to dance."