

# School & College Events

## Planning Tips by: Bob Moffett

**Planning a successful student dance or other event requires more than just picking the right DJ. Read on to find out more about how to make your special event a memorable success.**

The wide variety leisure activities available to teens and young adults today can make it difficult to meet your attendance goals when hosting a dance or other special event. Great events don't "just happen."

Getting students to your event means competing with movie theatres, laser-tag, paint ball, skating rinks, arcades, malls, CD-Roms, video rentals, cable TV, concerts & sporting events. Put interesting variations into new each event you stage.



### Start early!

Promote your event well in advance of it's actual date. Allow adequate time for students to anticipate, make plans, and prepare for the event. Allow yourself adequate time to stage the event. Display posters, include a message in your schools public address announcements, and make ticket sales (if any) readily available.

Don't wait for the buyer to come to you. Make your tickets available during lunch or break times in the cafeteria, student center, or other public area. Encourage attendance by selling groups of tickets for slightly less than the individual price. Don't assume that you can "*schedule it and they will come.*" Know who's coming before you open the doors.



### Give them a reason to attend.

Create the desire for people to participate. Combine your dance with other events or civic and community goals. Contests and team competitions are always a great way to spark of enthusiasm. Fundraisers, marathons, and drives, are all easily incorporated into entertainment events and often guarantee that participants will attend.

Need refreshments? Have a bake sale at the dance! Also, make your event space a social one where even *wallflowers* can be a part of the festivities without feeling pressured to participate in activities they might rather observe.

Create a loyal following by linking every event to the next. Promote your **next** event at the **current** event by recognizing the champions or highlights of the **previous** event. Make your guests feel like they are part of an exclusive ongoing club. Don't underestimate the power of a few photographs, and some after-party promotion.

### Have a theme and make it fun!

You don't have to be Walt Disney to create a great theme. Just keep it simple, fun, and something everyone can relate too. Don't limit yourself by thinking your theme has to be tied to some musical period or genre.

Let your imagination be your guide. Create your own game show, hold a Hollywood premiere for your own school play, run a team make-over contest, or just celebrate Halloween in January. The important thing is to make it new, different, and fun!

### Budget Boosters

You can help keep your budget in line by soliciting local merchants to help you with prizes for your contests and games. Movie theaters, arcades, ice cream shops, and other venues that are frequented by teens are a great source of gift certificates. These merchants know that teens always come in groups, and a pair of passes awarded at your dance usually turn up alongside an additional 4 or more customers.

Agree to have your DJ or MC recognize the vendor for their donation during your event, and remember to send a formal thank-you letter as well.

Check with the DJ or entertainer you've hired to find out what they can do to assist you with posters to promote your dance, discount pricing on novelties that might complement your theme, or lighting to enhance your decor.

Decorating efforts can be incorporated into your contests, assigning specific areas of the event space to teams who compete for a particular prize. Have a ballot box or judges panel to determine the outcome, and announce the winning team during your event.

### **Avoiding Trouble**

To minimize the impact of substance abuse design an event for which people want to be sober. When you incorporate more than music into a dance - you encourage people to participate rather than withdraw. Activities that unite people through their abilities or common goals help to connect them in spite of the usual peer pressure one feels to "fit in."

### **The Right Price**

Services are available in a wide range of prices. However the Mobile DJ field is filled with hobbyists, and part time enthusiasts. Saving money is no reward if the DJ is too ill equipped to handle your event or arrange a substitute in the event of illness or other problem..

Avoid paying inflated rates for services you know exceed your needs, or for the promise of results you know to be unrealistic. Shop wisely and ask plenty of questions.

The single busiest day for private events is Saturday. Consider the possibility of saving money, or getting better value by scheduling your event on a Friday evening. This often gives you a greater availability of talented DJs and better priced options that might otherwise not be available to you on a Saturday.

You can even rent equipment for those occasions when you feel it better to "do-it-yourself."

