

Event toolkit: Case study

Name and department: Jessica Ball, Development and Alumni

Title of event: Donor Celebration Event

- **Can you describe the event that you held? (e.g. detail the event, what did you do, attendee numbers, subject area, why did you do it)**

A company has been supporting Birkbeck's students for a number of years, providing funding for scholarships, entrepreneurship and internships. In order to mark their 10 year anniversary this year, the company requested that we hold an event at Birkbeck. This also served as a mode of thanking them for their support of the College and demonstrating the impact that it had had on our students.

In addition to inviting senior staff from the company and Birkbeck, we invited all the known beneficiaries of the company's funding over the past three years. A total of 150 guests were invited, of whom 58 attended.

The event itself was an afternoon reception in the Council Room with teas, coffees and cake. It comprised of networking and speeches from key representatives of each organisation as well as from a beneficiary of the funding.



Afternoon Reception in the Council Room

- **What did you want to achieve by holding the event?**

We wanted to build a stronger relationship with the company by demonstrating that their support was valued and had an impact.

- **What worked well in the in the planning, design and delivery of the event?**

Working closely with colleagues to define objectives and to plan the event was vital, as was sending the invitations out in plenty of time – I tend to send them at least 6 weeks in advance for this sort of event.

- **What were the main challenges that you faced?**

Finding a suitable room in the College is always a difficult one – I'd advise booking the room as far in advance as you can.

- **What top tips would you give to those considering running a similar event?**

Firstly, consider your objectives and decide whether an event is definitely the best way to meet them. If it is, make yourself a timeline and a project plan so that you can stay on top of all the smaller tasks that come up when planning an event. Consider who you would like to invite as well as how many people you actually want (and expect) to attend the event. You'll generally have to chase people for a response and it's good to be able to spread these chases out so that you can avoid looking desperate!

If you are asking other people to organise elements of your event or to write a speech or to design display materials, make sure to give them plenty of time to do so – this is why it's so important to plan out your event thoroughly at the beginning. New ideas will always come up during the planning process but the more time you give colleagues to help with any supporting tasks, the better the end product.