

Event Toolkit: Case study

Name and department: Lucy Tallentire, BEI (on behalf of Department of Management)

Title of event: The Lord Marshall Memorial 2017

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

The Lord Marshall Memorial is an annual event held in the summer term, to commemorate Lord Marshall's lasting influence on business and society. Lord Marshall also devoted much time and expertise to public service duties, especially championing British interests around the world, and as Chair of Governors at Birkbeck.

The first part of the event took place in the Keynes Library, where 45 specially invited guests attended a conversation between Joanna Bourke, Professor of History at Birkbeck, and our guest speaker Lord Browne of Madingley, former CEO of BP (1995-2007) and now Chairman of L1 Energy.

Professor Joanna Bourke posed questions to Lord Browne on a number of themes - his upbringing, sexuality and the importance of accountability and authenticity in business. Twenty-eight of the guests were then invited to a more intimate dinner following the conversation, in Birkbeck's Council Room.



The Council Room Dinner

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

A few years ago, the Executive Dean of the School of Business, Economics and Informatics introduced an ecosystem approach called B4E, which involves engaging with stakeholders of various forms for the following reasons:

- **Advocacy behaviour reinforcement** - to encourage senior stakeholders such as research partners and alumni in senior positions in the field to share good news of current work at Birkbeck and to thank them for their engagement with the College as regular givers of money and time.
- **Connect academics with industry and business** - to enable two-way learning and collaboration, philanthropy and to receive recommendations of people within their network, who may benefit or show interest in Birkbeck's work.
- **Strengthen relationships** - to reengage and value our key business contacts and key external research collaborators globally.

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

In terms of planning, our guests were responsive to personal invitations by email. The final arrangements for promotional booklets, seating plan and guest list were dealt with well in advance, which allowed more time for us to consider what further matters might set this event apart from others.

We also introduced a much more detailed checklist of roles and responsibilities this year, which we discussed at a briefing meeting beforehand. This extra planning stage made the delivery of the event much smoother; everyone knew their individual roles and were aware of any potential problems.

In terms of the delivery, the calibre and candour of our speaker was a real asset; attendees found Lord Browne highly engaging and current, praising the manner in which he reflected on difficult and provocative themes with honesty and openness. Joanna was also an outstanding partner to the conversation; it is very important to consider the best possible interviewer in a conversation format, to get the best out of the speaker.



Guests Networking at the Drinks Reception before the Event

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

Our specially invited guests are very busy people, and we had to consider the time pressures of their diary; the invitations for this event had to be sent at least eight weeks in advance. This posed a lot of time pressure but ultimately it made time to complete the smaller, 'bitty' tasks at a later stage.

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

My three top tips for an event such as this would be:

- Learn from the experiences of others
- Use a checklist
- Make sure to 'zoom out'

There are several other members of staff at Birkbeck who have held similar events in the past, and it is a great idea to get together to share ideas from their evaluation. Similarly, using a checklist mapped to a calendar of reminders can help keep you on track.

Finally, while it is the finer details that can make a lasting difference to an event such as this, it is very important to be able to 'zoom out' from these details to consider the primary needs of guests. Signage, travel assistance and attendance reminders must be as well organised as the registration process, promotional materials and catering.