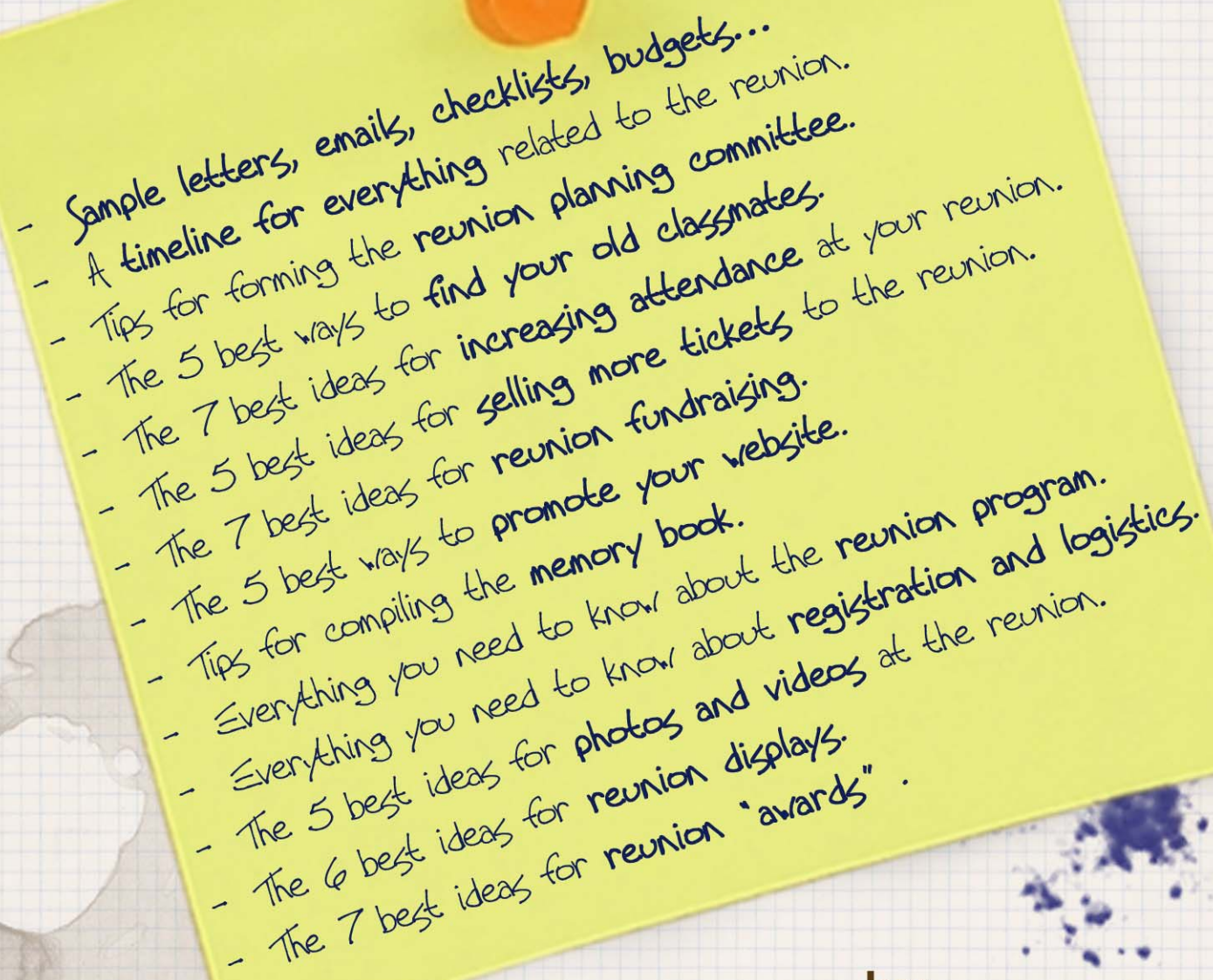


REUNION PLANNING 101

*Everything you need to know to
plan your class reunion.*

- 
- Sample letters, emails, checklists, budgets...
 - A timeline for everything related to the reunion.
 - Tips for forming the reunion planning committee.
 - The 5 best ways to find your old classmates.
 - The 7 best ideas for increasing attendance at your reunion.
 - The 5 best ideas for selling more tickets to the reunion.
 - The 7 best ideas for reunion fundraising.
 - Tips for compiling the memory book.
 - Everything you need to know about the reunion program.
 - The 5 best ideas for photos and videos at the reunion.
 - The 6 best ideas for reunion displays.
 - The 7 best ideas for reunion "awards".

by

Robert Hirscheimer

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

MyEvent.com has had the privilege of hosting thousands of Class Reunion Websites over the last 8 years. During that time we have seen well organized reunions that have been very successful, and others that never materialized due to lack of interest. In this book we tell you what to do so that you end up in the former category and not the latter.

We have interviewed many reunion committees to find out what were the secrets of their success and why some events fell short of the organizer's expectations. This book is a result of a lot of hard work from several people and I would like to especially thank Lara Sadowy who conducted the research that was the foundation of this book.

We hope that you are able to derive lots of information from this book to help you along in your efforts to produce a wonderful event that your classmates will remember for years to come. Please send us an email (info@myevent.com) to let us know if it helped you during the planning process, if you have any suggestions to add, or if you want to send us a testimonial.

Robert Hirscheimer

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INTRODUCTION

Planning a reunion can be a challenging task, but armed with this book you are guaranteed to make the job a lot easier. We will address all of the elements that are critical to having a successful reunion from beginning to end. You will benefit from the information in this book whether you are only *considering* having a reunion or if your planning is well under way. In either case you will find great tips and ideas that will make your reunion a success.

The suggestions in this book apply to a reunion with as little as 50 classmates or more than 500, and they are valid if you are planning a 5 year reunion or a 50 year reunion. Most reunions occur around milestone anniversaries such as 10 year, 20 year or 30 year periods, although odd numbered years work as well.

In the following chapters, we provide critical information needed to keep you on track and on budget, so that you can have the best reunion possible.

Some of the things we will cover in this book include:

- The 5 best ways to find your old classmates.
- The 8 things you should do at your old school to help plan the reunion.
- The 7 best ideas for increasing attendance at your reunion.
- The 5 best ideas for selling more tickets to the reunion.
- The 7 best ideas for reunion fundraising.
- The 6 best ideas for displays at the reunion.
- The 7 best ideas for “awards” at the reunion.
- The 5 best ideas for photos and videos at the reunion.
- The 5 best ways to keep people coming back to your website.
- Tips for forming the reunion planning committee.
- Tips for compiling the memory book.
- Everything you need to know about the reunion program.
- Everything you need to know about registration and logistics.
- A timeline for everything related to the reunion.
- Sample letters, broadcast emails, checklists, budgets...
- Tips, tricks and ideas to get the most out of your website.
- Much more...

A NOTE ON REUNIONS IN THE AGE OF THE INTERNET

High school reunion planning in the 21st century has been greatly facilitated thanks to the Internet. The world wide web has made it much easier to search for classmates, vendors, favors, and do all kinds of research to help plan the event. The web has also made communicating with classmates and collecting information so much easier today than it was prior to the Internet age.

The best way to correspond with classmates is through a reunion website that acts as a communications center where you can disseminate important reunion details, collect information, sell tickets, create a buzz and so much more.

In the past, creating a website required a lot of technical skills and knowledge that the average person did not have. Thanks to “do it yourself” reunion website builders such as Myevent.com, the task of creating a reunion website has been made extremely easy. One of the chapters in this book will be devoted to getting the most out of your website and we will throw in tips throughout the book on how your website can help with your reunion planning.

PART I: WHERE TO START

This section summarizes the step-by-step instructions on planning your reunion. To ensure you have sufficient lead-time, **you should ideally start planning 12 months in advance** of the event. If you only have 6 months or less, you can still pull it off but you may need to adjust your timeline accordingly. We will go into each of these steps in depth later in the book.



CHAPTER 1: YOUR FIRST STEPS

STEP 1: **Recruit A Committee**

The first part of planning your reunion involves evaluating if there is enough interest in having a reunion. This requires that someone take the initiative to get the ball rolling (that is probably you, if you are reading this book). This may seem like an obvious step, but some people overlook it and jump right into the actual planning before addressing some of the fundamentals.

To know if you have the pre-requisites for a successful reunion, you should know if you will be able to form a committee. This is not absolutely necessary but if you are planning a reunion entirely alone you need a lot of free time. Make a few phone calls to old classmates, to recruit potential committee members. We will examine the keys to forming the committee and what the committee does later in this chapter.

If you can get a committee together and you are commemorating a milestone event, your chances are pretty good for generating a lot of interest in a reunion. There is a natural tendency for people to want to reacquaint with old friends and see what happened to everyone since they graduated high school.

STEP 2: **Create A Website**

At this stage, you want to start to create some interest in the reunion. The more content that you can put on the website the better. Classmates who visit the website will see that you are serious about the reunion and will help to spread the word.

Reunions are about nostalgia, so putting a lot of pictures and stories from high school is highly recommended. Include a page that reflects back to the time that you graduated. It's very easy to find pictures and information for the year you graduated on sites like wikipedia.com and other websites.

You should post a message that tells visitors you are in the early stages of planning the reunion. Invite everyone who visits the website to register on the classmates page and to tell their friends about the website. Encourage people to come back often as there will be many updates in the coming weeks and months.

STEP 3: Prepare Business Cards

If you are planning a reunion of a significant size, you may want to create business cards with the name of the school, the reunion year, and your school mascot. Include the website address, your name, telephone number, and email address. Business cards are very inexpensive and are convenient to leave with old classmates that you come face to face with. They are also good to leave with vendors and once again show a level of seriousness that usually results in a well - attended and successful event.

STEP 4: Take A Trip To Your Old School

Going back to your high school will achieve several objectives, some of which will be immediately useful and others that will help you later on. Make sure you do these things below:

- Inform the school about your intention to plan a reunion.
- Ask if anyone else has contacted the school with the same idea. If so, contact that person and try and join forces or decide which reunion will be planned. There is no room for competing reunions.
- Give the alumni director some of the business cards, in case former students contact the school.
- Obtain a complete class list with any contact information the school can provide.
- Ask the administrator of the school website to add a link to your website.
- Ask to borrow the school banner and mascot for the event.
- Ask if they still have any yearbooks from your graduating year.
- Come prepared with your digital camera and video camera to photograph the school grounds. You can use this later, on the website and at the reunion.

STEP 5: Prepare A Preliminary Budget

Have this ready before your first committee meeting. (see Chapter 5.)

STEP 6: Assemble A Reunion Committee

In step 1, you put out feelers to see who may be available to help plan the reunion. Now you need to get more serious and get people to commit to the event. Pick a date for your first meeting. Your committee can be as small as one person (if you have unlimited free time) or you can have several people. It all comes down to the various tasks that you need to consider. The more people you have, the more the tasks will get spread out. You are looking to create a diversified group who weren't all from one group in high school. This will help spread a wider net when trying to locate people, and when encouraging people to attend.

STEP 7: Reunion Administration

Open a bank account and organize your paperwork. Create a file (on your computer or in a notebook) to keep track of missing / located classmates, entertainment, venues, vendors, memory books, ads, donations, who has rsvp'd, paid, etc.

STEP 8: Getting The Word Out

This is a task that will be shared to a certain extent by all committee members and each classmate that is planning on coming to the reunion. (Detailed in Part III).

STEP 9: Planning The Event

You will want to assign particular tasks to committee members that have experience in that area. There is a lot of planning needed for the event since it includes the actual reunion and everything that happens that night (Detailed in Part IV).



CHAPTER 2: THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Planning Committee can include as little as one person (not highly recommended) or several people, and it can include sub-committees as well. It is easier to manage smaller committees, but larger ones have more people to get things done. Remember that you can always enlist volunteers outside of the committee for non-decision-making tasks. It really does come down to assigning the various tasks to as few or as many people that there are on the committee. Whatever you decide, strong leadership from the Chairman will be crucial for keeping everything on track.

To establish an effective committee, choose your members carefully. Anyone in the entertainment, hospitality or food service industries would be a great asset in planning the event. It is also wise to include business owners, as you may be able to approach their companies to pick up the tab for long-distance bills, postage, office expenses, prizes and more. We stress again the importance of including alumni from various social groups. The more diverse your committee (from cheerleaders to the chess club), the better the turnout. This is particularly relevant when it comes to getting the word out, something that all members of the committee must partake in.

How many committee meetings you have will depend on several factors, such as how much time you have left before the reunion, how big your committee is, and the size of the reunion you are planning.

Committee members can have conference calls and update each other with emails. However, meetings are critical to the success of the reunion. People will definitely be more proactive in fulfilling their responsibilities when there is a deadline of a meeting coming up as opposed to a task written on a list. You cannot afford to have committee members procrastinate, which is why regular meetings are a good idea. We recommend meeting approximately every 8 weeks. You should look at the committee meetings as a mini reunion. It's a



good opportunity to reconnect with old friends and have a good time prior to the reunion.

Committee meetings are only useful if they have a specific purpose, so be very organized and come with an agenda (distributed beforehand) and make sure that everyone knows ahead of time what they were supposed to prepare for that meeting.

Although some committees attempt to plan everything as one unit, it can be far more effective to break into smaller groups, or 'teams'. When dividing the workload, try to match up the right people for the right task. Someone who works in advertising or public relations, for example is well suited to get the word out. Businesspeople may do well to negotiate with vendors. You may want to draw a diagram to help you sort out the chain of command, as well as the responsibilities of each team, and each team member. Make sure people know which decisions can be made on their own and which decisions need the entire committee's consultation.

You will always get better results when you assign particular tasks with particular deadlines. A strong assignment would be: "Graham will check out potential venues and report back to the committee by January 15, detailing the top three choices, including pricing and the pros and cons of each option." This will be much more effective than "Graham will take on the venue search."

Each task requires a person's name attached (if it is a team assignment, put someone in charge), the expectations of the committee regarding the task, and when the task is to be completed. This is a key factor in the successful time-management of the planning committee.

We recommend the following breakdown of responsibilities:



If you have other responsibilities on your list and you are unsure which team should take them on, a good rule of thumb is: If the task involves spending money or can be seen at the event, send it to the Planning The Event (Event) team. Conversely, if the task results in ticket sales or communicating with alumni, assign it to the Getting The Word Out (Promotion) team.

It is important to note that although one team is responsible for finding classmates, *all* committee members should be involved in the search. This is the most challenging and time-consuming undertaking you will face. After an initial search, the promotion team can assign names of the 'still missing' to each committee member based on who has better contacts with each individual.

At the final meeting before the event, everyone becomes one team again. As you map out the day of the event, individuals are assigned several tasks (preparing registration lists, prepping nametags, decorating, setting up displays, assembling registration kits, etc.)

CHAPTER 3: REUNION TIMELINE

The time periods mentioned here are for an ideal scenario. You may need to adapt your timeline to the time that you have to plan your reunion.

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

12-18 months in advance:

- Put out feelers for committee
- Start a website
- Visit school: inform them of reunion; obtain class list, yearbooks...
- Prepare preliminary budget
- First committee meeting
- Open bank account
- Send out 'Save The Date' cards (emails)
- If the date is not fixed, set up an online poll with three options
- Collect online Classmate Profiles and pictures (ongoing until event)
- Missing classmate search (ongoing until event)
- Post Missing Classmates page on website (and update as you go)

8-12 months in advance:

- Finalize date of event (if possible)
- Book venue
- Book caterer, if not provided by venue
- Determine if there are informal events surrounding the reunion
- Revise budget
- Finalize ticket pricing



- Send broadcast e-mails hyping the reunion (ongoing until event)
- Invite the non-paying guests (teachers, coaches, etc.)
- Start early-bird ticket sales and incentive programs
- Sell or barter ad space on your website
- Book entertainment
- Set up memorials page on website
- If you are hiring a photographer or videographer, get quotes
- Plan the festivities (awards, games, speakers)
- Canvass classmates & businesses for giveaways
- Plan Memory Book (and solicit ads if you will include them)

4 - 8 Months in advance:

- Telephone classmates who you found but have not yet responded
- Plan décor, centrepieces, displays, registration kits
- Sketch a detailed diagram of the room and set-up
- Order any printed decorations (banner, custom balloons, etc.)
- Order mementos (keychains, pens, etc.)
- Collect content for the displays (ongoing until event)
- Enlarge any photos that will be displayed (class photo, teachers, etc.)
- Arrange for any on-site sale items (t-shirts, etc.)
- Turn up the heat for ticket sales
- Send out invitations by email or by post

1-3 Months in advance:

- Assemble slide show
- Assemble video
- Arrange supplies for name tags
- Get volunteers to work the registration desk (if possible)
- If you plan to have paper tickets, (not recommended) send them
- Broadcast e-mail reminders
- Cut-off for final ticket sales (if your venue needs notice for extras)
- If you plan to have a program booklet, assemble it now

The Final Weeks:

- Prepare guest lists for registration table
- Give final meal count to caterer
- Prepare name tags
- Compile registration kits
- Prepare all office supplies and signs needed for registration desk
- Arrange for a float for the cash box
- Memory books should be delivered
- Confirm with all vendors, suppliers, donors, etc.
- Prepare detailed schedule of the big day

Reunion Day:

- Decorate room, tables, displays
- Set up registration area
- Ensure required audiovisual equipment is set-up
- Review check-in procedure with registration workers
- Pick up or ensure delivery of registration kits, giveaways, mementos..

Post Reunion:

- Upload reunion photos to website
- Send thank-you notes to all donors / sponsors / committee members
- If you plan on future reunions, send a follow up letter to all alumni
- Share your knowledge with other classes from your school
- Close bank account

CHAPTER 4: TRACKING CLASSMATES

Best Practices For Registrations

Many people ask what is the best way to use RSVP, Registration, and sell Tickets to their Class Reunion.

If you are using a reunion website, you do not have to use the RSVP page, but it can give you more **information for planning purposes**. When you first set up the website the inclination for your classmates is not to buy tickets right away (though they should be encouraged to do so with a link to the "buy tickets" page). They are likely to want to wait and see who else says they will go and procrastinate paying for their ticket.

The idea behind the RSVP page is that it gives you an idea of who says they will come. Knowing how many people to expect can help in planning the various events of a reunion. As time goes by, you will end up with **4 lists of people**.

List 1

People who have not been contacted and who have not registered on the website. These people should go on the **Missing Page** (or in the "Missing" section of a page), and your classmates should be encouraged to direct these people to come to the website to Buy a ticket or RSVP.

List 2

People who have registered (on the website on the classmates page or in the guest book), but **have not RSVP'd** or bought a ticket. You can follow up with these people to see what their intention is and encourage them to buy a ticket or at least RSVP one way or the other.

List 3

These people have RSVP'd and said they will come to the reunion but they **have not bought a ticket yet**. You should follow up with these people and encourage them to buy a ticket.

List 4

These people have bought tickets and can go on your "**who's coming**" page. You may not want to activate this page until you have a certain amount of people that have purchased tickets.

In order to stay organized, you need to create a tracking system that is always current. It is important that you generate lists of the four key groups mentioned above.

The Promotion team's goal is to keep classmates moving from group 1 towards group 4.

Once you have identified who is in which group, it is easy to target those in group 3, for example, by sending them a broadcast e-mail reminder: *'We noticed that you intend to come but have not yet purchased your tickets. Take advantage of our early bird offer and save \$30 off the ticket price by purchasing your tickets today!'*



PART II: MONEY MATTERS

When planning a reunion, people often wonder who will pay the deposits needed to hold the venue, caterer, and other services that require early payments for reservations. This section addresses how to deal with these issues, how to raise money and how to balance the budget.

Before we dive in, we stress the importance of standard accounting practices:

- Open a reunion bank account with joint authorization for two committee members (we recommend the Chair and the Treasurer). The account should only require one signature for any given transaction, including writing checks.
- Make copies of all checks received before depositing them, and all checks written before sending them.
- Detail all incoming and outgoing money in a central ledger or computer document.
- Most reunions are not designed to make a profit. If you have a small surplus of funds at the end, this can be used for a donation, or to pay for the website after the reunion.

CHAPTER 5: REUNION BUDGET

In the early stages of planning, create a preliminary budget in order to determine the scale of your event. You can do this even before you start searching for classmates. As the months pass, you will be able to update the information as decisions are made. If possible, get a copy of the previous event's budget as well as actual revenue and expenses.

STEP 1: **Estimate the number of paying guests**

On average, 40% of classmates will attend the reunion and 50% of those will bring a guest. Therefore if you had a class of 300 people, your paid attendance will be $300 \times .40 \times 1.5 = 180$ paying guests. Remember that this is just an average and that there are many things that can affect the turnout. The number can vary greatly depending on the milestone you are celebrating, how well you promoted the reunion, the personality of your class and many other factors. However, you need to start somewhere, so using an average figure as stated above allows you to begin budgeting. You can eventually use actual numbers based upon real answers from classmates as they RSVP and purchase tickets.

STEP 2: **Set a temporary ticket price**

This ticket price should not be advertised until you've established a final ticket price. The average reunion ticket price is \$75 per person, which is usually enough to create a special event, yet still be affordable. Some committees offer package deals for couples (ex. 2 tickets for \$130). In one aspect, this is fair, as only classmates (and not dates) will get a full registration kit or memory book, but on the other hand, the savings of \$20 is unlikely to bring in extra guests, so we advise against it.



STEP 3: Do the math

40% of your class X 1.5 for guests, multiplied by the ticket price \$75 (as an example) provides your main source of revenue. If we estimate out of a class of 300, 180 paying guests at \$75 per person, the overall budget will be \$13,500. **Plan accordingly.** Should you be able to revise ticket sales higher later on, you can then spend more on prizes or other things. Ticket sales will not be your only source of revenue. All additional income, however, will cover the 'we forgot to budget for that' expenses. Trust us, you'll need it!

STEP 4: Itemize and estimate expenses

If you don't know how much live music costs, call a few bands and take an average as your estimate. This works with every category. Be practical in your planning. If your entire budget is \$6000, you would be wise to opt for a DJ or prepared CDs rather than a live band. This is true for every expense. There is usually an expensive way or a frugal way to do just about anything. You need to decide what is most important to your class and spend the money on the deluxe things that will mean the most to your particular class.

STEP 5: Finalize your ticket price

This is a committee decision. If you feel that \$75 tickets won't bring in enough revenue, see what happens if you raise the ticket price. Conversely, if you think that a \$75 price is too high, you will need to cut out certain things from the budget.

STEP 6: Committee members buy the first tickets

At the first or second meeting, members of the reunion committee should buy tickets for themselves and their dates. These funds can be used towards deposit for venue, and up-front costs (such as postage, copies, website). If you haven't finalized the ticket price, pay the temporary price and even up later on. If these funds are not sufficient, the committee members may consider loaning the reunion a certain amount, to be paid back once tickets start selling.

Example of a Preliminary Budget

Expenses		Revenue	
Promotion		Estimated Attendance	
Website (1 year premium)	\$149	180 guests X \$75	\$13,500
Advertisements	\$1,000	Fundraisers	?
Stationary	\$200	Donations	?
Postage	\$200	Ads	?
Printing	\$200		
Miscellaneous	\$1,000		
Planning			
Meals \$40 X 180 + 5 Guests	\$7,400		
DJ	\$500		
Décor	\$250		
Prizes	Donated		
Memory Book	\$2,400		
Program	\$100		
Name Tags	\$100		
Total Expenses	\$13,499	Total Revenue	\$13,500

If you don't book a hotel or restaurant, remember to budget for caterer, tables, linens, tableware, dance floor, waiters, bartenders, chairs, audiovisual equipment, easels, and liability insurance. You can see why most committees opt for hotels!

The preliminary budget example on the previous page shows expenses and expected revenue on budget, which is where you want to be. If your expenses appear to be higher than your revenue you will need to remove (or reduce) some expenses, raise the ticket price or generate more funds through fundraisers, donations, and ads.

The budget is fluid and you can adjust as you go along based upon how much money you raise. You should definitely do your best to raise as much money as possible through ads, donations, and fundraisers because it will either help you prevent a shortfall or allow you to go all out for the reunion. You could use the funds raised from other sources to spend more on prizes, add valet parking, make a donation to your school, or keep the website going.



CHAPTER 6: TICKET SALES

Ideas to Increase Ticket Sales

To create some cash flow, **committee members buy the first tickets**. If tickets are \$75 and there are 6 committee members, and they all bring dates, you have generated \$900 in start-up funds. This is easily done, as everyone planning the event understands the need for immediate cash flow.

Many classmates who intend to come, will wait until the last minute before buying their tickets. Whether this is due to procrastination or wanting to see who will come before committing, you should be prepared for it. You may want to step up the pressure in the weeks leading up to the reunion, especially to those that indicated an interest but have not yet bought their tickets. There have been many reunion committees that were fearful of having a shortfall, only to find that in the last 2 weeks they sold 50% of their tickets. This stresses the need for the committee to buy tickets early because you may need some cash to get things going.

Here are some tips on how to encourage buying tickets sooner rather than later. Remind people that purchasing tickets is easier than ever. Taking a minute to go online and **pay by credit card** is much simpler than writing a check and sending it in by snail mail. Online payment is the fastest way for the funds to get in your account, so consider it your #1 choice of payment. Myevent.com allows you to make direct deposits right into your reunion bank account. In addition to making it easier for your classmates, you will save yourself a trip to the bank by selling tickets on your website. As already mentioned, since so many people elect to buy tickets late, you will want to keep this easy option available as late as possible.

You may want to set up a **three-tier price system** based on deadlines. For example, if your event is on June 20, 2010, offer an early-bird rate of \$60 if tickets are purchased before December 31, 2009. A second, 'regular' rate of \$75 can be offered until May 1st. Anyone who purchases tickets following the May 1st deadline will be charged \$85.

Organize an **early-bird draw**. The first 50 people to buy their tickets will be eligible to win a prize. The prize can be donated, or it can be as simple as a free ticket to the reunion.

Remind people that there is a **final cut-off date** to purchase tickets. Depending on whether or not your venue can accommodate last minute guests, you may offer a higher rate for classmates who want to buy tickets at the door. If you do decide to offer ticket sales at the door, (be sure to work this out in advance with the caterer), publicize that you cannot guarantee last-minute registration kits. If people come to the event following the meal, you may reduce their cost of the ticket by the cost of the meal.

Some committees ask classmates for **non-refundable deposits** towards their reunion ticket, one year before the reunion takes place. This is a good way to ensure you have enough cash on hand for up-front expenses.

The downside of saying that deposits or tickets are non-refundable is that it encourages people to wait before buying their tickets. Some classmates may be concerned that the reunion will not happen and they will lose their money. You really don't want to give people any excuses to procrastinate, so we strongly recommend a full refund policy since it encourages early ticket sales.

At your first committee meeting, decide if you will be inviting any non-paying guests. Do you want to include the beloved math teacher, the basketball coach, the principal? It is common courtesy to offer each person two tickets at no cost.



CHAPTER 7: FUNDRAISING

The more revenue you collect, the more there is to spend. Just because you based your budget solely on estimated ticket sales, does not mean you should not try and raise money through other means. The funds you generate through other avenues can either offset a shortfall or be used to add more value to the reunion.

7 SURE-FIRE WAYS TO GET HOLD OF SOME EXTRA CASH!

1. Sell ad space (website, program, memory book)

This is easy and requires little effort. Send a broadcast e-mail to your classmates, and try and sell advertising to your vendors as well. After you have negotiated your best price with a vendor, try to get an extra 5-10% discount in return for a position on the website and in printed materials. You can offer different level sponsorships for different amounts. This can either be done by size of ad or by level (gold, silver, bronze). You can also approach businesses that have a vested interest in the community. Ad space on the website, in the memory book, in the program, and at-the-event signage can all be components of various advertising packages, according to the amount of the donation.

2. Put effort into three areas: donations, donations, donations

There are two types of donations; cash and anything else that you can use or give away as a prize. A good place to start is the school. The school is certain to be a donor. They will usually agree to lend you the school banner and memorabilia for the displays. If you truly have no funds to work with, consider asking the school for the use of the gym or auditorium.

You can ask classmates for general cash donations towards the reunion, and the best way to do this is on the website. You may even get people contributing to the reunion fund who do not plan to attend the event.

There is a Donations page built right into your Myevent.com website which is a great way for you to accept donations by credit card without a merchant account. All you have to do is click on Accept Donations in your control panel to get started.

You may find that there are some classmates that have done exceptionally well who want to give money back to the place where they started to become the successful person they are today. It is also a great way for people who cannot attend the reunion to give something back.

You can either raise money strictly for the event itself or for a special cause. Maybe there is a classmate who is in a particularly bad situation who needs help for a medical problem, or maybe you just want to raise money for the high school to be able to purchase new equipment. We recommend that the donation fund can be used for a combination of things, such as new equipment and enhancing the event.

Donations can take many forms. There are all different kinds of supplies and prizes that you need to have a successful reunion. Classmates will not donate if they do not know what is needed, so it is important to list what you are looking for on a page on your website and keep it updated.

Donations can include everything from postage to balloons to prizes and items to be given away at a silent auction. Inform classmates about the list. Keep it clever and continue to throw in some improbable and funny requests, (such as a mechanical bull). This will get classmates visiting the page regularly, out of curiosity. Once each item is secured, indicate so on the website and include the name of the donor. You can also have a blanket request for 'Anything that might be neat to include as a giveaway in the registration kits.' This is a fantastic way for alumni business-owners to contribute their product or promotional items. It also opens the door for a hodgepodge of truly surprising treats for attendees - registration kits have been known to include everything from lingerie to calculators to ball-caps.

3. Negotiate with Vendors!

Depending on when you are having your event there may be room for negotiation (if it is not at a busy time of year for the vendor). It is always a good idea to get more than one quote for each service and then try and play each one off the other to see who will give you the best deal. As already mentioned, once you have what

you think is your best deal, try and get an added discount in exchange for advertising.

Fundraising opportunities abound at the reunion itself. When selecting from the list below, keep in mind the work involved in relation to the payout.

4. Hold a silent auction

This requires some effort soliciting donations as well as setting up displays of the auction items at the event. If you received donations in the form of goods and services, this could be a good place for those items. Local restaurants are often willing to give gift certificates for this purpose because it can draw in new clients and they get some advertising at the event.

You will need a sheet that describes each item with space for people to write their name & bid amount. It is a good idea to have a list that describes all the items, and to give them out at registration. To simplify the work involved, auction off memorabilia that is already at the event. People can even bid on the enlarged photo of your school class. If committee members have old sports memorabilia that they no longer feel attached to they can add that to the auction as well.

5. Set up a raffle

Although this also requires soliciting donations, it is less work than an auction. Set up a small table at the event (preferably at registration as well) where people can buy tickets. Have a sign ready detailing the prizes and the ticket price. You can also send a volunteer or committee member to sell tickets throughout the night.

6. Hold a 50/50 draw

This requires almost no effort, and can be arranged at the last minute, as long as you have a roll of tickets on hand. The idea is similar to a raffle, but the one prize is 50% of the money generated by selling tickets. So if you sell 100 tickets at \$5 each, the winner of the draw will get \$250 (half of \$5 x 100), and \$250 will be raised for the reunion. The 50/50 is a guaranteed hit, and there is almost no prep involved.

7. Sell drink tickets

If you need to cut costs, forget the open bar. Instead, each guest can receive two complimentary drink tickets. If they would like more, they can buy additional drink tickets for a minimal amount (\$2 or \$3). These can be used for beer, wine or mixed drinks. This not only brings in additional funds, it also makes people more aware of their alcohol consumption.

All of these fundraising opportunities seem to do better as the night progresses. As the liquor flows people are known to become more generous, so do not wrap up any of these efforts too early if you are serious about raising money. This may be particularly important if these efforts are required to balance the budget. In that case you may want to do more than one of the above.

Make sure there are many options for people not to drink and drive. This can involve the availability of taxis, designated drivers, or a hotel nearby to stay overnight.

PART III: GETTING THE WORD OUT

An important task for all committee members is promoting the event. If anyone on the committee works in advertising, public relations or promotions, have them lead this effort. Finding classmates is your first priority. Once you have started locating people, the focus changes to gathering bio information and selling tickets.

CHAPTER 8: CLASSMATE SEARCH

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the classmate search starts with a trip to your old school. Try to obtain a complete list of your graduating class. This will ideally include their telephone number and address at the time of graduation. Hopefully, this will also include names of parents. Some schools may also keep current contact information for any alumni who have inquired about upcoming reunions. If the school does not have a class list, use your high school yearbook as a reference. Once you are at the school, ask if they will put a link to your reunion website (from the high school website), and to mention your reunion in any newsletters.

Once you have a master list of names, you can create a page on your website that has all the names of your classmates. It is recommended to have another section of that page (or another page) that has a list of the classmates that have been found. This can also be done on one list in different colors. Make sure to keep a record of both married and maiden names. A word of caution - if someone is reported as deceased, verify the information before listing them as such.

Finding your classmates is one of the most important parts of planning the reunion because without your class there is no reunion. We recommend that everyone on the committee share the responsibility of spreading the word about the reunion.

THE 7 BEST WAYS TO FIND YOUR CLASSMATES

1. Word of mouth

Each member of the committee should telephone or e-mail classmates they still know from school, and inform them about the reunion. Classmates should be encouraged to visit the website to submit their profile, and help spread the word to whomever they are still in touch with.

2. Missing Classmates Page

The website is a great way to get all your classmates involved in the search. Remember to update it regularly. You can issue a Classmate Challenge: Award points to classmates for each person they find. The winner of the challenge can be acknowledged at the reunion with a special award or a free ticket to the reunion.

3. The telephone book

Most adults live in the town where they grew up, so this is worth a try. When you get a wrong number, inquire if you are speaking to a relative of the classmate.

4. Search the Internet

You can search on people's names using Google and sometimes come up with the information you are looking for. Facebook, [LinkedIn.com](https://www.linkedin.com) and Myspace are also great resources to find lost classmates.

You can also try online versions of the phonebook. [Whitepages.com](https://www.whitepages.com) (US and Canada) or [Canada411.ca](https://www.canada411.ca) (Canada only) are good resources.

5. Run an ad

This does cost money, but most parents and family still live in the area, so many classmates are sure to get the word. Include the website address so they can get more information. Some newspapers may have a section that allows these kinds of announcements for free.

6. Post flyers

You can do this at local stores and restaurants: This is free but time-consuming.

7. List the event

This can be done through community affairs announcements on radio and television stations, in the local church bulletin, at the fire station, etc... You should also call local radio stations during prime time (morning and afternoon drives) and ask them to plug the reunion.



CHAPTER 9: CREATE REUNION WEBSITE

We mention the reunion website throughout this book because it applies to many aspects of your reunion planning. This chapter will deal exclusively with suggestions on how to get the most out of your class reunion website.

Assign a committee member to be the site administrator. This need not be a tech savvy person. Anyone can create an interesting, useful website with a reunion website builder such as Myevent.com. The reunion website serves more than one purpose.



THE 5 BEST THINGS THE WEBSITE WILL DO FOR YOUR REUNION

1. It is a great way to **create interest** in the reunion and **increase attendance**
2. It is a great way to **sell tickets** to the reunion
3. It allows you to **get feedback from classmates** about the reunion
4. It is the best place for classmates to **get reunion updates**
5. It is a **meeting place** for alumni

If you have not already done so, you should take time to explore all of the buttons on the main class reunion website at www.reunions.myevent.com. Click on FEATURES to see all the things you can do with your reunion website, and click on TESTIMONIALS to see some great examples of websites that have been built on myevent.com. You can also click on any website in the search box on the main page to see what others are doing (there are thousands to see on that page). The point is to get some ideas of what others have done which you can use for your own reunion website.

myevent.com

DIY Reunion Websites | Sell Tickets | Donations

FREE TRIAL | **FEATURES** | DESIGNS | HOW IT WORKS | WHY A WEBSITE | **TESTIMONIALS** | PRICING

Make a Class Reunion Website
It's fast & easy!

As seen in:

LIFE | Creating Family Web Sites DUMMIES

Living | THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

>> [Read More](#)

Search for a Class Reunion

Search

(Enter at least 3 characters)

Find Your Class Reunion!

- <c>parkway...
- '58 Homecoming
- '60 Park High 50th Reuni...
- 1959 New Philadelphia Hi...
- 1959 Rock Reunion
- 1960 Garinger High School
- 1960 Whs 50th Reunion
- 1966 Sarasota And Riverv...
- 1968
- 1969 Woodrow Wilson 40th...
- 1970 A. C. Flora: 40th ...
- 1970 Enumclaw 40 Year Re...
- 1970 Leuzinger 40 Year R...
- 1975 Middlesex High Scho...
- 1985 Marion Hardinq Pres...

Don't forget to also spend some time checking out all the buttons in your control panel to get the most out of your reunion website. If ever you have any questions, visit the help centre or contact our customer support either by online chat, email or toll free 877-769-3836.

Here are a few pages we recommend that people use on their reunion website:

- **Classmates / Registration page**

This is where people can enter their contact information, 2 pictures (then and now) and tell everyone what they've been up to. On your home page, you should remind people to submit a profile on the page commonly called "classmates" (or "registration"). You will be able to send their contact information (visible only in the control panel) to the planning tools section of your control panel to be used later for various things including a broadcast email.

- **Questionnaire**

This page (called "custom form" in your control panel) can be customized with all sorts of questions, that allow for answers in all formats (true/false, multiple choice, paragraphs...). It's a great way to collect information for the memory book if you are planning on having one. The custom form is also a great survey tool that is more scientific than the Poll Page because there is a report of the results with names attached.

- **Missing Classmates page**

Classmates visiting the site can get involved by helping to find the missing! On the home page of the website encourage visitors to see if they know anyone on the missing page and tell them about the reunion. Remember, word of mouth is your best way to promote the reunion. You can use one of the "Extra Pages" (in your control panel) for this or use the home page. Simply type in the names of the missing people and update it regularly.

- **Memorials page**

Pay tribute to those classmates no longer with us on one of the "Extra Pages" (in your control panel). Verify your source before putting someone on this page.

- **Sponsorship page**

An excellent way to raise money for the event. Offer ad space on this page to classmates or vendors who give cash or prizes to benefit the reunion. Use an Extra Page (in your control panel) for this.

- **Message board**

This is a place where alumni can catch up with each other before the reunion, and they can stay in touch after the reunion.

- **Purchase Tickets page**

Offering classmates the ability to purchase tickets online with a credit card is a great way to increase attendance at the reunion and reduce your workload.

- **Donations page**

There is a Donations page built right into your Myevent.com website which is a great way for you to accept donations by credit card without a merchant account. All you have to do is click on Accept Donations in your control panel to get started.

- **Photo Albums**

A picture says 1000 words. Providing your classmates with images from high school will go along way to illicit feelings of nostalgia that are a key ingredient to helping classmates decide whether to attend the reunion. Great before and after the reunion and for those who could not come to the event.

- **Flashback Page**

One thing your classmates will surely enjoy is a trip down memory lane. This includes a list of all the things that were current the year you graduated. You can find information about events of a particular year simply by doing a search on that year. It's fun for everyone to see the pictures and content related to music, tv, movies, sports, politics etc...Use an "Extra Page" (in your control panel) for this.

- **Poll Page**

A great way to see what people want at the reunion. You will never make everyone happy, but it is nice to know what the majority wants when it comes to music, food, ticket prices etc...

- **Quiz Page**

Another fun exercise for visitors to your website is to test their memories. You can create questions and answers on the quiz page that will see how much your classmates remember about their high school days. You can also include some events of that year in your quiz.

- **RSVP Page**

When you first start planning the reunion, many classmates will be reluctant to buy tickets. The RSVP page is a good way to at least measure if people intend to come to the reunion. This can give you important planning information, and give you a list to follow up with as the reunion approaches.

- **Travellers Page**

A very important page that conveys many important details about hotel accommodations, recommended restaurants, things to do and links about the city where the reunion is taking place.

- **Guest Book**

Give everyone a chance to leave a comment before and after the reunion. re automatically added into the calendar when they add their profile to your site.

- **Calendar**

Enter all your reunion events, payment due dates and activities. Classmate birthdays are automatically added into the calendar when they add their profile to your site.

- **What's New**

Here classmates can post life events: engagements, marriages, new babies, grandchildren, honors, awards, etc. This can be done on a section of the home page or on an "Extra Page".

- **Reunion Tips**

Include humorous lists on how to behave at the reunion, what not to do, how to mentally prepare. Keep them light and funny. This can be done on a section of the home page or on an "Extra Page".

- **Who's Coming**

Activate your Who's Coming page so that others can check and see who is planning to attend. We advise that you wait until there is a critical mass of tickets

sold (60, for example), before you post this information. The reason for this is that people are less likely to buy tickets if they know that only 12 have been sold so far

- **FAQ**

Create your very own Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page. Create a list of all the questions you are asked most frequently, and answer them. This will save you time answering emails and phone calls, because you can point people to your FAQ page.

- **Alumni in The News**

Keep classmates abreast of the achievements of fellow alumni. It will make your alumni network strong and give classmates a quick view of who recently celebrated an achievement or welcomed a new family member! It will also bring classmates returning to the website for news!

TOP 7 IDEAS TO KEEP ALUMNI RETURNING TO THE WEBSITE

1. **Post 'Guess Who' photos**, where alumni have to browse the site to locate the answers. This can be a classmate, teacher, administrator, picture of a building or class room...
2. **Create a Who's Coming page** so that others can check and see who is planning to attend. We advise that you wait until there is a critical mass of tickets sold (60, for example), before you post this information. The reason for this is that people are less likely to buy tickets if they know that only 12 have been sold so far.
3. **Post old pictures of classmates and teachers** on each page. Change them periodically.
4. **Include a "last updated"** date on the home page so people will know when new information has been added.
5. **Include video clips.** This can be of reunion committee meetings, clips from the old school, random clips from classmates. It is very easy to add a digital video clip to sites like youtube.com (more than 100 million people have figured it out so you know it can't be that hard) and then add a piece of the embed code that "Youtube" gives you to put on your website.
6. **RSS Feeds.** It is very easy to get RSS feeds on just about anything. You can select feeds from prominent news sites that are updated daily. You can also select some offbeat unique content that people will find interesting and entertaining. The more interesting content you have on your website the more reasons people have to visit regularly.
7. **Reunion Blog.** Blogging is a friendly and interactive way to keep your classmates up-to-date on your business, organization, personal plans or anything at all. It also helps keep your content fresh so your visitors will come back more often.
Create and maintain an online journal with interactive responses from your classmates. This is a great way to foster an online dialogue with your classmates

CHAPTER 10: CORRESPONDENCE

With the increasing popularity of e-mail, contacting classmates has never been easier or cheaper. Although some committees still rely on snail mail for some mailings, many have abandoned sending regular mail because of the cost and time required. If you are using the website and getting people to register with their contact information (including email address), you will build a list that you can use to communicate for the months ahead. Some website builders like Myevent.com have a built-in 'broadcast e-mail' function, which facilitates this process (in the control panel, click on planning tools and then broadcast email).

How you correspond with classmates will depend on how successful you have been at collecting information. If you managed to get a list of addresses and it is very early in the planning stage, it's not a bad idea to send a "save the date" card (once you have selected the date of course) by regular mail. It may be the only piece of regular mail that you send but it may be a good way to drive traffic to the website and get people to register so that you have their contact information later on.

Anything sent by snail mail should include the logo or school mascot on the envelope, or you run the risk of it being written off as junk mail. The first mailing helps find classmates, and puts a physical reminder of the upcoming event in their hands. If parents receive the notice, they will usually pass on the information. You will also get plenty of returned mail due to out-of-date addresses. Keep the returns and update your master list accordingly. This will help you create your missing classmates list.

'**Save the Date**' cards are usually sent by post, as you may not have people's e-mail addresses by this point. If you come from a small tight-knit class and most of you still keep in touch, you can simply send the Save the Date notice by e-mail. Even if nothing has been planned yet, Save the Date cards let people know the following vital pieces of information:

- A reunion for your graduating class is in the works.
- The date (or 3 date options, and explain they can vote online).
- Classmates can register for the event on the website, where they can find further details.

Save The Date!

Jefferson High Class of '90

20 Year Reunion

June 26, 2010

for details and updates, register at
www.jefferson1990.myevent.com
or contact Donna Stevens (Chair)
at (212) 555-1234 or dstevenst@talktome.com

Announcement letters have the advantage of including more information than save the date cards, but the disadvantage of overwhelming the reader with too much information. If you choose this option, consider including:

- A nostalgic letter encouraging everyone to come to the event.
- A request to fill in bio info on the website.
- A list of missing classmates and a plea to help locate them.
- A list of needed items, with a plea for donations.

Jefferson High Class of '90 - 20 Year Reunion

Dear Jefferson High graduate (Class of '90),

Please mark Saturday **June 26, 2010** in your calendars, to reunite and learn what everyone else has been doing all this time!

We are in the early stages of planning, and we need your help! **Please register online at www.jefferson1990.myevent.com**. There you can submit your classmate profile , biographical info for the memory book, photos, and contact information so in the future we'll be able to e-mail you with updates. On the website, you can **purchase tickets** (\$65 before December 31, 2009, or \$80 afterwards). Visit the message boards to catch up with old friends. You can also vote on the location (Holiday Inn Midtown or Carmine's Restaurant), and other event details.

Even if you cannot attend, please consider sponsoring the event to add your name on the **Sponsor Honor Roll** (Gold Sponsor \$200; Blue sponsor \$100.) We are also searching for a bunch of donated goods so please take a minute to check out our **Supplies Needed** page on our website.

We have found you but we are still looking for others. Be a part of the solution! Visit our **Missing Classmates** page and start searching. The person who helps us locate the most classmates will win a special prize at the reunion!

Once you have registered on the website, you'll be hearing from us again with information as the planning unfolds. Entertainment, contests, and awards will all be decided in the coming months, and we are planning to arrange discounted hotel rooms for out-of-towners. If you have any ideas, or if you would like to join the planning committee, we'd love to hear from you.

Your Planning Committee:

Donna Stevens, Chair
dstevens@talktome.com
(212) 555-1234

David Haber
haberd@winwin.net
(212) 555-6767

Trudy Miskoff Houghten
trudytrue@whynot.org
(732) 555-4336

An invitation should be sent (either by post or e-mail) once you have finalized the following details: place, date, time, dress code, cost, cut-off dates for tickets, and additional activities on the same weekend. Once the invitations are out, the big focus is *selling tickets*, as well as finding the missing classmates (as always). Below are a few sample e-mails that you might consider sending.

EARLY BIRD DRAW

Buy your ticket now and get in on the early bird draw! Buy your ticket before Oct 31, 2009 and you will be entered into a draw for 2 free reunion tickets, and a dinner for 2 at Morton's. Winners' names will be posted on the web site.

Paying for your ticket early will not only give you a shot at a great prize, it will make our lives (the planning committee) much easier because we need funds to put down - payments on many services.

The committee has decided to offer a 100% refund if you can't come after having bought a ticket, so there is no reason not to buy your ticket today!

We know it's a full year away, but we all know how time flies...
Don't procrastinate. Get online and buy your tickets today!

Did you know you can buy your tickets with a credit card right on our website ?
You can also pay by check. Make it payable to Jefferson 90 reunion and mail it to:

Jack Black
1234 Small Street
Baltimore, MD
USA 56789

Your Planning Committee, JH Class of '90

VISIT THE WEBSITE

We have set up an amazing website at www.jefferson1990.myevent.com. You can find all sorts of fantastic facts about our years in school, updates on teachers, 80's trivia, message boards where you can connect with other alumni, and a Purchase Tickets page where you can buy tickets online quickly and easily with a credit card. We even have an advice column written by David!

Please take the time to get involved; more people are registering every day. At last count, 120 classmates had already registered! We ask that you forward the website to any classmates you may run into, or that you have kept in contact with.

Looking forward to looking back,

Your Planning Committee, JH Class of '90

Use humour - The broadcast email below is good in a "save the date" email or anytime during the planning process...Using humour and piquing your classmates curiosity may push some people who are on the fence to come to the reunion!

"Have you ever wondered what happened to that hottie who sat in front of you in History class ?

Are you curious to see how the handsome jock has done in real life and if he is now out of shape and bald ?

Wouldn't it be nice to tell your favorite teacher how much he/she has influenced you?

You could answer all these questions and more at the Jefferson '90 high school reunion.

To find out more and visit the official Reunion website at www.jefferson1990.myevent.com.

This website will NOT cost you anything and you will NOT be bothered with any unwanted advertising. The sole purpose of the website is to assist in organizing the Reunion and serve as a contact point for all people associated with Jefferson HS class of 1990.

PLEASE HELP SPREAD THE WORD. Forward this email to ANYONE and everyone you know who attended Jefferson in 1990!

FOUND CLASSMATES CONTEST / EARLY BIRD REMINDER

We are almost six months away from the big day, and we are pleased to say that we have already found 180 graduates out of 240. But we would like to track down the remaining **60 missing classmates** in time to inform them about the reunion.

Please lend a hand! Do your part by visiting the Missing Classmates page on our website, www.jefferson1990.myevent.com. If you recognize any names and know where a classmate can be reached, please do it. Pick up the phone or send an e-mail, and direct them to the website. If you know where to find the parents (or any relatives) of a classmate, please reach out and get that classmate to the website to register.

And if good will isn't enough, the person to find the most classmates wins a **special prize**, to be presented at the reunion. Shari Jones is currently in the lead, having found 8 classmates!

And remember to get online and **buy your tickets!** The early bird deal (\$65 per ticket) runs out at the end of the month. Starting January, the price will jump to \$80 per ticket.

Your Planning Committee, JH Class of '90

MEMORY BOOKS

We are currently assembling a **memory book** to distribute at the reunion. The idea is that a ½ page will be devoted to each classmate, whether or not they plan on attending the event. We will include then and now photos, as well as some biographical data. In order for your information to be included in the book, you need to **submit your entry online (on the Bio page) no later than March 15, 2010.**

Classmates who do not attend can receive copies upon request. Please let us know in advance if you are interested, so that we may order an accurate number of copies.

We are able to provide the books as a gift to classmates, due to the generosity of those who have placed ads in the book. When you receive your copy, please take the time to check out the ads. These businesses are supporting us; let's try to support them!

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The planning committee has received tons of feedback (all positive!) regarding our reunion plans and the website. We have also fielded a lot of questions. The same four questions, actually. So we thought we'd set the record straight on some FAQ's.

Can I bring my spouse?

Of course! Just remember that the early-bird rate is only good until the end of December, so make sure to buy both tickets before then, for twice the savings!

What should I wear?

We recommend 'casual chic.' Of course you can wear whatever you like.

When will I receive my reunion tickets?

If you have paid in advance, your name will be on a list at the door. There are no physical tickets. All paid participants are listed on the "Who's Coming" page of the website.

Can I purchase tickets at the door?

No, sorry. So get online and buy your tickets now!

182 days left (and counting),

Your Planning Committee, JH Class of '90

WRAP UP

We hope you had a fantastic time at the reunion. We sure did, and we were thrilled with the turnout. After excessively patting ourselves on the back for a few weeks, we thought we'd take care of some loose ends.

Please take a moment to visit the website and click on our **survey** page. You will find a few questions geared to give us tips on ways to improve in the future. You will also have the opportunity to vote on a 25 or 30 year reunion as the next event.

While you are online, take a look at some truly memorable **photos from the reunion**, and we encourage you to share your own and upload them into the album. You will soon be able to **purchase our website on CD**, as a keepsake. More details will follow in the coming weeks.

We want to take this opportunity to **thank everybody** who contributed to the success of a truly memorable event. We couldn't have done it without you!

And remember to keep us posted if you move, so we'll be able to find you next time around!

CHAPTER 11: STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING ATTENDANCE

The success of a reunion depends on the turnout!

7 BEST STRATEGIES TO INCREASE ATTENDANCE AT YOUR EVENT

1. Be Persistent

Many reluctant people warm up to the idea with time, particularly if they know certain people have bought tickets. Encourage everyone to get people to come to the website to register and have everyone pass the word along to as many friends as possible.

2. Promote the Event

Announce the reunion at the high school basketball games or in the town parade. Take an ad in the newspaper and do your best to get free publicity through local media. Are all your old classmates on Facebook? Create a Group announcing your reunion and include a link to the website from the group. It will be so easy to promote your reunion on Facebook if all your classmates already have Facebook profiles. Stay top of mind by creating a Twitter account and have all your classmates follow your tweets on your reunion planning progress.

3. Update The Website

Make updates to the website regularly to keep classmates coming back. Get creative. Post daily quotes, pictures, and polls. Create a weekly trivia challenge and award token prizes. Ask classmates to reveal their favorite memories of school, and post a different contribution every week.

4. Call each classmate

Split the class list up among committee members. Nothing replaces a live person telling you that they would like to see you there. This is time-consuming but highly effective. On the phone, you can immediately dispel any fears classmates may have about attending. If they don't know anyone who has rsvp'd, you can encourage them to reach out and try to promote the event to *their* old crowd.

5. Invite well-liked teachers and coaches

Many classmates have fond memories of special teachers that may have had an impact on their career and knowing that they will be at the reunion creates an added incentive for some classmates that are on the fence.

6. Create a “Who’s Coming” page on the website and update it daily

Wait until there is a hefty amount of tickets sold or RSVP's received before you post this information. People will want to go if they see it will be a well-attended event.

7. Send Broadcast Emails

For many people the decision to come to the reunion is a process. The more reasons you give them to attend and the more nostalgia you throw at them, the more likely they are to come.

PART IV: PLANNING THE CLASS REUNION



CHAPTER 12: WHEN & WHERE

WHEN

In the North-eastern and Midwestern United States, **Summer** is the most popular time of year for reunions, and the main reason is the weather. If you want to leave the possibility for picnics and other outdoor events at the reunion, then choose June, July or August. If you are in the southern states you may actually prefer non-summer months to avoid the extreme heat. **Thanksgiving Weekend** is also popular, as it coincides with trips back home for many alumni.

When selecting a date for the big event, you will need to weigh the convenience of a holiday weekend (people may already be planning a trip home) against the inflated costs of a hotel's high season. Holiday weekends also tend to be booked earlier in advance (venue, entertainment, accommodations, flights), so if you do decide Thanksgiving is the right time for you, be prepared to book early! A reunion is typically scheduled on a Saturday night.

WHERE

If you are choosing a popular location on a holiday week-end you will need to **book your venue at least 12 months in advance**. So, where you have the reunion may be a function of what is available. But what place do you want? In our estimation, **hotels are the way to go**. They provide you with support and supplies that would otherwise be your responsibility. Need a microphone? No problem! Need an easel for your registration sign? They've got it! They have done this before and have the experience that you lack. Our next choice would be a restaurant, but make sure you have sufficient room for a registration area before you commit.

If you decide to choose a road-less-travelled (a gallery, or museum for instance), budget accordingly, and make sure that you have thought through the following list before signing on the dotted line: caterer, waiters and bartenders, tables, chairs, linens and dinnerware rentals, liquor licence, audiovisual equipment, a screen for

the slide show, registration tables, dance floor, washroom supplies, and liability insurance. You can learn a lot about a venue by visiting while an event is in progress, so take the time to see a live event if you can.

When you check out a possible venue, walk through it slowly. Imagine how you will divide the space for reception, registration, dining and dancing. Discuss decorating the walls, hanging a banner, and the equipment you might need: projector, screen, microphone, podium, easels, bulletin boards, and registration tables.

Choose a middle-of-the-road menu when looking at prices. Ask the hotel to give you a per person rate including open bar, and a per person rate without it. Find out the details of the cash bar option. How do they handle special meal requirements for those with allergies or special dietary requirements? Ask how it works if you decide to sell last-minute tickets at the door.

Once you have made your venue selection, try and negotiate the best price you can. If you are flexible with your dates, see if there is a quiet time for them that will reduce the costs significantly. Keep in mind though that the priority is to get a well-attended reunion, so give them dates that you have already determined will work for the majority of the class.

Position your reunion as a non-profit event and you may get a favorable rate. Verify what perks come included (if it is a hotel you may receive a complimentary suite for the evening, which comes in handy.) Find out the cancellation policy, liability insurance, hidden costs, overtime implications, etc. **Remember to read the fine print before signing anything!**

If the reunion is at a hotel, approach the hotel to arrange a special accommodations rate for out-of-town participants. If the venue is not a hotel, choose one nearby. Inform alumni about the special offer and any reservation deadlines that may be in place.

CHAPTER 13: AMBIENCE

As you discuss the kind of ambience you want for your reunion, don't just think in terms of decorations. Many elements contribute to the overall mood of the night.

Theme

When setting the tone for your reunion, *you do not need to plan a theme*. Your event comes with a built-in theme! Help classmates reminisce about their school days by including graduation-year memorabilia as well as newsmakers from that era in the decorations.

Dress Code

A popular choice is casual-chic, which is pretty much what your classmates would wear when going out for dinner with friends.

Entertainment

Book your band or DJ as soon as you have confirmed the date of your reunion. Make sure their repertoire is what you are looking for, particularly if you would like to stick with tunes from your high school days. See them perform before you sign an agreement or contract. If you are working with a very small budget, consider asking a family member to DJ. Another option is burning pre-mixed CDs or loading up an mp3 player that can just play all night, if the venue has an adequate sound system. We suggest that you use the website to solicit music requests from classmates. Some committees rent karaoke machines, but don't rely on this as your only source of music.

Eating & Seating

Buffet is by far the wisest choice for most reunions. Aside from significant savings, it gives people the opportunity to mingle during the meal. Pre-arranged seating keeps the room static and limits each person's connections to only nine other people for a significant portion of the evening. Assigning the seating also becomes quite touchy and is best avoided. Many caterers and hotels now offer small food stations throughout the room, instead of the traditional long row of food. This

minimizes line-ups and congestion at the buffet table, and makes it feel more like a chic event.



TOP 7 DECORATING IDEAS

Decorations provide an opportunity for creating a nostalgic mood, and you need not spend a fortune. Keep it simple.

1. **Balloon bouquets and streamers in your school** colors is a well-used idea. You may want to choose a balloon service that inflates the balloons for you, which can be a real time-saver.
2. **Include a School banner.** Before having one made, see if you can borrow a banner from the school or from other classes that have had reunions.
3. **Enlarge old school photos** and post them on the walls and tables.
4. **Assemble collages** from pictures that have been submitted.
5. **Post Top 10 lists** from your graduating year: movies, music, news stories.
6. **Go to thrift shops** and buy memorabilia from your high school years (records, toys, board games, and whatever else you can find).
7. **Build centerpieces** with what you find; creative centerpieces can double as awards and raffle giveaways!

TOP 7 DISPLAY IDEAS

Every class creates a few unique displays for the reunion. Here are a few ideas:

- 1. Enlarge your graduating class photo.** You can ask everyone to sign it for a true piece of memorabilia. You can then copy that image and make it available to everyone or just give it away in an auction or as a prize.
- 2. Pay tribute to deceased classmates by creating a memorial display.** Post photos, short bios, and memories that you have collected. You can even initiate a tribute book where people can share comments and memories, and this book can be presented to the family following the event.
- 3. Post a US, North American or world map** that indicates all the cities where classmates now reside. You can also post a version of this on the website.
- 4. Display the school mascot, school trophies, etc.**
- 5. Post comments, memories and photos** sent in by classmates who could not attend the event.
- 6. Post the Sponsor Honor Roll,** listing all sponsors that gave donations or paid for space in advertising.
- 7. Have a photo collage of your teachers** that can also be signed by everyone.

Program Booklet

Some committees choose to have simple booklets that detail the order of events for the evening. You can also list the menu, contests, raffles and draws, award categories and recipients, as well as a quick word of welcome. Be sure to thank all sponsors and donors in the program. This can be as simple as one page folded in half or a few pages depending on how much content and advertising you have.

TOP 5 IDEAS FOR VIDEO AND PHOTOGRAPHY

There are many inexpensive ways to get good photographs and video footage the night of the reunion. Here are a few:

1. **Place a disposable camera on each table**, and encourage classmates to use them! Don't forget to collect the cameras at the end of the night. You can scan in the photos and upload them to the website after the reunion.
2. **Call the Yearbook staff** of your high school and hire a student photographer.
3. **Enlist family members as photographers for the evening.**
4. **Make arrangements with a photographer** to be at the event, take candid shots as well as poses, and sell the photos directly to the classmates. This way, the committee does not have to worry about the cost.
5. **Enlist a volunteer or hire someone to videotape classmates** giving a one-minute summary of what they've been up to. Edit the video after the event, and sell the DVD to classmates. This is much more lively than a memory book. This video can also be uploaded to the website.

Satellite events

Depending on the amount of out-of-town guests you have, you may consider organizing additional events. The nature of the events depends on how long it has been since you graduated. A 10-year reunion might benefit from an informal 'Ice-Breaker' at a bar on Friday night, and a pick-up football game or pool party on Sunday. 20-year reunions often include a family picnic on Saturday or a Sunday pancake breakfast. Many reunion-goers also enjoy a round of golf on Sunday.

Out of town guests

If you have the resources, arrange welcome packages for classmates who are guests at the hotel. Be sure to include a list of all the classmates checking in. Deliver the packages to the front desk. When people check in, they are handed the package!

CHAPTER 14: THE FESTIVITIES

For each attendee, the main attraction to the reunion is other classmates. The most memorable part of the evening is getting reacquainted with old friends. Having said that, you are expected to plan some activities. There are ongoing activities, as well as an official program.

TOP ONGOING ACTIVITIES

Slideshow

Run a continuous slide show throughout the evening. You may be able to borrow a projector from the venue where you are having the reunion or from a committee member's day job. Get a head start on this early by requesting photos in your first mailing, or through a special e-mail announcement. You can also use the slideshow from your class reunion website in combination with a projector.

Wine cellar

Classmates who want to participate bring a bottle of wine. When they hand in the wine they get a special ticket. Draw a ticket during the program and someone goes home with a wine cellar! Remember to advertise this in advance, so people will know to bring bottles.

Contests

Announce a contest for the best school-related story or memory, or hand out a high school-era trivia questionnaire. Solicit submissions throughout the night, and announce the winner during the program.

Official Program

Arrange a host for the evening. If no committee member feels comfortable, consider approaching the class valedictorian or class president. Ensure you have a working microphone set up.



Awards

People have come to expect awards at reunions. Keep them funny and light, and in good taste. The general rule is that if you have to ask if a certain category or prize is in good taste, assume it is not. If you give out gift certificates as prizes, make sure they are for national stores and restaurants. You will need to collect this information from your classmates through the website or through other correspondence.

TOP 7 IDEAS FOR AWARDS AT THE REUNION

- 1. Most recently married**
- 2. Married for the longest time**
- 3. Most children or grandchildren**
- 4. Newest parents or grandparents**
- 5. Most popular teacher**
- 6. Travelled furthest for the reunion**
- 7. Most educated**

Video

Video elements can include a 'now' tour of the school and old hang-outs, interspersed with 'then' footage, interviews of former teachers, and clips submitted by classmates who could not attend the event. If someone on the committee is experienced at shooting and editing video, this can be assigned to them as a task. Done well, it can be the highlight of the evening.

Brief remarks

The key word here is brief. Include a story or two from your school days. Take a moment to honor classmates who are no longer with us. Invite a teacher to say a few words. Announce the winners for any raffles, contests, and the wine cellar. Distribute the prizes and get on with the party!

Games

Here are three suggestions, but the possibilities are endless.

- The host pulls out two names at a time. The contestants compete for the prize by identifying a jingle or song or commercial or movie from your high school years. This requires preparation before the reunion.
- A small gathering can play Two Truths and a Lie. Each person writes two truths and a lie about themselves on a paper, which then gets posted on their back. Everyone else tries to guess which one is the lie. Hand out cards with everyone's names and pencils, so people can track their guesses. The person who guesses the most lies correctly wins a prize. Revealing which statements are true / false is always a big hit.
- Each classmate writes a piece of personal information that is not common knowledge (ex. "I have a pet pig"), and the information is then gathered. Draw submissions, read them aloud, and let the class guess which submission belongs to which person. The person with the most correct guesses wins.

CHAPTER 15: GIVEAWAYS

There are two kinds of giveaways associated with reunions: stuff that people win, and stuff that gets distributed to everybody (a 'loot bag' full of goodies in the registration kits.)

It is a good idea to plan multi-purpose decorations. Some design centerpieces can also serve as prizes for contest winners. Awards can be records, movie posters, games that are already adorning the hall. If you have the extra time, it is always fun to arrange gag gifts for the awards: diaper pins for newest parents, a bottle of aspirin for parents of triplets, some golf balls for first to retire etc...

When you are arranging the loot bags for the registration kits, donated goods need to meet a few criteria: If it is free, legal, and does not offend, include the item in the loot bag. When ordering or creating custom souvenirs, however, try to choose simple yet practical items, which will not show up in next week's trash. You should place an order for any customized items at least 3 months in advance. Here are some nostalgic ideas that don't break the piggy bank.

TOP 6 GIVEAWAYS AT THE REUNION

1. **Notepads, pens and pencils** in your school colors printed with your website address.
2. **Candy bars and Tic-Tacs** commemorating the event.
3. **Coffee mugs printed with high school logo** and reunion date, filled with now-obscure candy from your youth.
4. **Bags of M&M's in your school colors.** Tie the bags with school-color ribbons.

5. **Take a class picture at the reunion.** E-mail it to WalMart for processing and have a volunteer pick up the photos an hour later. Everyone goes home with a copy. Or once the reunion is over, have photo key chains made, and send them by mail. Everyone will be delighted with the surprise!

6. **Include a CD of the slideshow.** Print out labels that commemorate the event.

Not everything needs to be a giveaway. T-shirts, for example, are a great gift, if you can afford it. Otherwise, you can sell shirts. To ensure you have the right sizes in the right amounts, put a sample on the website, and people can pre-pay for shirts (specifying size) when they buy their tickets. This also frees you up from dealing with a lot of cash at the event. Another option is to arrange for a school supplier to come to the event and sell t-shirts directly to classmates, which will free up your time and resources. Memory books are also commonly sold, when the expense of the books is not covered in the budget.



CHAPTER 16: MEMORY BOOKS

Memory books are the true souvenirs of a reunion. They are also known as photo books or programs. They can be distributed at the reunion or sent out post-reunion, and may be hardcover, soft cover or on DVD. This will take time, persistence and a constant gathering of information every time you make contact with a classmate. If the book will be printed, check out pricing in advance. Make sure to weigh the value versus the cost, as hardcover books cost far more than soft cover. DVDs are great if you don't have the time to prepare. Your final text should be ready to go to the printers one month in advance, and allow plenty of time for proofreading.

Here are some elements you might want to incorporate:

- Note from the committee about their journey
- Class directory with 'Then' and 'Now' photos of each graduate, along with brief details about their life, marriage, kids and work
- Class statistics (who lives in which states, how many college graduates, how many married, etc.)
- Trivia and Top-10 lists from your graduating year
- Memorial to deceased classmates
- Advertisements
- Family photos
- Updates on some popular teachers
- Recap of the event (post-reunion)
- List of award and contest winners (post-reunion)
- Candid photos from the evening (post-reunion)
- Date of next reunion (if known)

If you give memory books as a gift to attendees, consider sending complimentary copies to those who could not attend. This may boost attendance at the next event! If you are selling the book, advertise it to those who were not at the event as well.



CHAPTER 17: REGISTRATION AND ON-SITE LOGISTICS

Planning an event well involves thinking ahead. The more prepared you are, the smoother your evening will run. The following are must-haves before the day of the event:

A diagram of the layout

Indicate where you want the reception area, registration area, tables, bar, food stations, displays, etc.

Schedules of set-up and of evening events

Give a copy of the schedule to all volunteers and speakers.

Decorations and supplies

Remind the volunteers when to be at the hall. Have lots of tape on hand, as well as staplers and scissors.

Displays

You can prepare most displays ahead of time.

Signs

Registration, 50/50, Raffle, Trivia Contest, Wine Cellar, Drink Tickets, Sponsor Honor Roll are all signs you may need to prepare.

All lists

Master class list, sponsor list, paid list (include names of spouses), etc.



Name tags

Use a large bold font, including maiden names and yearbook photo. Guest and spouse badges should have an easily identifiable look, so that people do not assume this is someone from school that they just don't recognize. Be prepared to create some tags on the spot for last-minute corrections and additions.

Registration kits

Contains current class directory, program, memory book, loot bag, name tag, and drink tickets. You can prepare generic kits and keep the name tags separate, or you can alphabetize the kits for easy distribution. Often, the loot bags will be handed out at the end of the evening, so that people are not bogged down with them during the event.

Giveaways

Confirm that all deliveries and pick-ups will happen according to expectations. You will need your drink and raffle tickets as well as anything that will be used for the games, contests and awards.

Setting up and taking down

Even if you have done your homework and the set-up is expected to be a breeze, there will inevitably be some small bumps the day of the event. Allow time in the schedule for the unforeseen. Start early in the day so you don't feel rushed. Store reusable items for future reunions.

Registration / check-in

Properly think through and plan the registration process. When guests arrive, they receive registration kits and nametags, as well as any special papers, tickets or questionnaires for any contests or games you are planning. Highlight their names on your guest list as they check in.

If you have a no-tickets-at-the-door policy, and classmates do show up hoping to join in the fun, try to accommodate them. If this cannot be worked out with the caterer, suggest that the guests return after the meal, for a discounted price. Keep track of any money you receive and issue receipts.

Don't bog yourselves down by running the check-in desk. Get a trusted volunteer for the night. Supply them with all the lists and information they need, and be available to them should any issues arise. They will also need some office supplies on hand (pens & pencils, markers, scotch tape and masking tape.) Make sure there are many pens, as people will be borrowing them all night to collect signatures in their memory books.

Any tables that deal with currency will need a cash box with a float. Raffles and contests will also need ticket collection boxes. Make sure that there is always at least one person (and 2 people is preferred) at the table with the cash box.

CHAPTER 18: LOOSE ENDS

The reunion is over! Your job is done! Well, almost. First there are some loose ends that need to be tied up:

- **Balance the books** and update them to include any funds raised at the event and any last-minute expenditures. Close the bank account, unless you want to keep it for the next reunion. If you have a large surplus, contribute to the school's endowment fund in honor of your event, or put it towards keeping the website alive to be used as an alumni website.
- **Send thank you notes** to the guests that attended, sponsors, the school, donors, and volunteers.
- Follow through on all outstanding **Memory Books, t-shirt orders**, etc.
- **Upload photos** from the event(s) to the website.
- **Send out a post-reunion e-mail** to all alumni requesting reunion photos for the website and feedback for next time.
- **Have a post-reunion meeting** two weeks after your event. Celebrate your accomplishment, but also take a moment to examine what worked, where the bumps were, and what can be improved for next time. Write these notes down for future reference.
- **Keep the lines of communication open.** Start an e-newsletter, and re-work your website to act as an alumni website until your next reunion.
- If your class is eager to stay in touch, **don't wait for the next big event!** Plan an outing to a sports event or concert. Have a standing bar night once a month. Start a jogging group. The possibilities are endless...

Planning a reunion is a milestone event that everyone who attends will remember for many years to come. Your goal is to rekindle relationships that have been dormant for a long time, and create a wealth of new memories for your classmates. Hopefully the ideas in this book will help you plan the best reunion possible so that it was a positive experience for everyone.

Please send an email to info@myevent.com if you have any unique ideas that you did not find in this book, or if you found the book helpful and you would like to send us a testimonial.

