

# 8 Steps to a Successful Grand Opening

## Step 1 Date Selection

- Allow plenty of preparation time. Give yourself 3-4 weeks if possible
- Avoid major holidays, Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursdays are best, try to avoid weekends
- Make sure you are positive about the readiness of your business, last minute details such as city inspections and furniture deliveries can ruin a good plan
- If inviting government officials ensure you have sufficient lead time



## Step 2 Choosing a Time

- Determine the type of special event you will conduct
- Morning events would begin no earlier than 8:00 a.m. as a rule
- Late afternoon or early evening events are most popular, guests can stop by on their way home from work
- The best time for an evening event is 4:30-6:00 p.m. allowing people a chance to drop by
- For media coverage consider their deadlines before selecting a time. Media outlets will inform you of their deadlines over the phone



## Step 3 Invitation List

Who you should invite to your special event is as important as hosting the event. Here are some suggestions:

- Current & potential customers, family & friends, suppliers, employees & their spouses/guests, media, those who helped you get started (banker, accountant, attorney, architects/engineers, all advisers), neighbouring businesses in your area, key government official's (Mayor, City Council Members, Regional Council Members)
- Prepare a simple invitation and include all basic information – who, what, where, when and why. Be sure to include a RSVP, either a return reservation card or a request to confirm their attendance by phone.
- Allow plenty of notice – two weeks is preferable, but keep in mind that Councillors and media outlets may need more notice – check with their offices



## Step 4 Food & Beverage

Although it is an added expense, serving food and beverage is a necessity for a successful event. No matter what time the event is held people will expect something to be served.

- For morning events, coffee, juice, fruit and pastries are perfect.
- During late afternoon or early evening events, light hors d'oeuvres or finger foods are appropriate
- Enlist the help of a caterer for medium to large events if you do not have time to provide your own food and beverage. Caterers can provide good advice
- If you decide to provide your own refreshments, have an ample food and beverage supply for your guests. Remember to also have sufficient plates, cups, napkins, trashcans and other supply items



## Step 5 Program Planning

Whether you are hosting a ground-breaking, a grand opening or an anniversary celebration, a brief program keeps the event focused. It provides valuable recognition for you and your key people, but it also makes the event more purposeful and allows you to explain more about your business. Consider these points:



- The shorter, the better. The ideal program time is ten minutes
- You can run the program yourself if you wish or ask an experienced friend to be the master of ceremonies
- Limit the number of speakers and the length of their speeches.
- Introduce only those who need to be introduced. Primarily elected officials and your closest associates
- Conclude your program with some appropriate ceremonial or symbolic activity to commemorate the event; a ribbon cutting for a grand opening, shoveling the first load of dirt for a ground-breaking, or cutting a cake for an anniversary of your business. This is a nice way to create good photo opportunities
- Speakers in any formal program should include appropriate city or regional government representatives. Also include partners or others you feel played a key role in your business.
- Always try to have a back-up plan for a rainy day. This may involve moving indoors at your place of business.

### Step 6 Media Coverage

Realistically, you should not expect extensive coverage, but inviting the media to your special event is definitely worthwhile. Be aware that you can request coverage but you might not receive it if they do not have staff available or print space to cover the story. Here are some suggestions of things you can do to enhance the chances that your event is publicized:



- Send your invitation to the news directors or city editors at least two weeks prior to the event. Include a personal letter explaining some details about your firm and why your event is different or has some significance to the community (many requests can be made online through the news outlets web page)
- Include a brief news release that contains the basics – who, what, where, when and why. It does not need to be fancy just factual
- Have someone take pictures with a good camera or hire a photographer for the event

### Step 7 Photos

Photos are an important part of the event, here are a few tips:



- If possible take pictures either in front of a company sign or outside the front doors
- Take a picture of someone cutting the ribbon
- Take good quality pictures that you can post on social media after the event
- The Brampton Entrepreneur Centre can recommend newspapers to contact

### Step 8 Working with Government Officials

When working with government officials it is important to follow protocol. We recommend these guidelines:



- If the Mayor attends the event you always call the Mayor up first to say a few words, Regional Councillors are called upon next, followed by City Councillors and finish with the owners of the business