

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

Once you've picked your act it's time to make sure you nail the finer details. Dave Bevan, Managing Director of Alive Network (www.alivenetwork.com) has this advice.

- When booking a party band **check that your venue does not have a sound limiter**. A sound limiter cuts the electricity if the volume of the band goes over a pre-set level. You should be aware that a venue with a sound limiter set below 92db (marginally louder than an unamplified violin) is likely to cause a huge problem for a live party band. A limiter set between 92-100db is workable – but the band will have to play very quietly so as not to set it off.
- **Make sure you book through an entertainment agency** so that if the worst happens, a replacement act can be found quickly. A good agency will offer comprehensive contracts which cover you for any eventuality – as well as offering out-of-hours emergency support.
- **Make sure you're clear on timings**. Events often run late – so make sure you've booked your acts to perform as late as you're likely to need them. Also make sure the acts are booked to arrive with plenty of time to set up and get ready. Bands in particular need to sound check – and this is best done before your guests arrive. Try to allow at least 90 minutes for this.
- **Double check that the act will provide sufficient PA and lighting equipment for the size of your event** (assuming you or your AV crew are not providing it).
- Make sure you, your agent, and the artist have all **exchanged out-of-hours contact phone numbers** for the day of the event.
- **When booking a celebrity** you need to be aware that use of their name or image in any pr/marketing/advertising will be strictly limited – and every instance will need to be agreed by their management.



CASE STUDY

Sonali Gurnani

PA at Sony and runner up of the Executive PA Magazine | Hays Awards for Best Organised Event

Type of event: Festivals party celebrating the holiday season of Eid, Diwali, Christmas

Theme: '70s Bollywood disco

Number of guests: 300-400

Entertainment: For the pool-side cocktail reception I organised cocktail flarers doing some tricks, a live singer and pianist, stilt walkers, henna hand painting artist, an aura reader and people dressed as comic Bollywood stars. In the main room we had DJs, a large flashing dancefloor and an amazing hula hoop act.

How did you select your acts?

The majority were found online, although our caterers provided some leads too. Ultimately a lot of the selection depended on budget. I read a lot of reviews online and I had to trust the event companies that the acts would deliver. I also ensured I gave them as much information about the event as possible.

What are your top tips for booking entertainment?

Realise that everyone can be resourceful and help you get contacts – such as your venue and caterers. Recommendations help you get the best deals within your budget and sometimes booking the majority of the artists with one company will help you build rapport, get a better deal and ensure you have a reliable company that you can use again.

MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

Want big results for a tiny budget? Karen Lindsey, who runs seminars on organising corporate events (www.HappinessIsATickedOffList.com) talks finances...

1 How much of my budget should I allocate for the entertainment?

"If the priority is for your guests to 'dance the night away' then after key elements of the event have been accounted for (venue, food and drink) the entertainment selected should supersede the monies allocated for say gifts, photographer or table decorations. It's all about identifying the objectives, precedence of elements and then allocating your budget accordingly."

2 How can I get the wow factor on a small budget?

"Should there be a theme; take your time to think through appropriate entertainment. A caricaturist, for example, could always adapt their usual performance to reflect the theme, thereby providing perceived bespoke entertainment. When combining the selection of the right venue, visual impact and entertainment fitting to the event – that's what creates the overall 'wow' factor, regardless of budget size."

3 Any cost saving tips when booking entertainment?

"Allowing ample time for in-depth research will ensure that you won't have to 'panic buy', which will ultimately save you money in the long run. If you are working to a tight budget, try using the following phrase... 'Are there any circumstances that you would be able to negotiate on your fee?' The answer will either be 'yes' or 'no'." ■