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# The Event Lab

## Onboarding Manual

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*A guide for the slightly overwhelmed, deeply ambitious event planner who has decided that this time, the spreadsheets will not win.*

**Screen Edition (Dark)**

Version 1.0 · 2026

Twelve modules. Three phases. Zero cloud dependencies. Your event data stays on your machine, in your browser, under your control.

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# Before You Touch Anything

Picture this. It is two in the morning. You are sitting with a cooling cup of something caffeinated, staring at fourteen open browser tabs, three contradictory spreadsheets, and a group chat that has devolved into a debate about whether the venue serves vegan options. Somewhere in your inbox, a keynote speaker's agent is waiting for a reply you forgot to send.

That moment — overwhelmed, slightly exhilarated, definitely under-slept — is precisely where The Event Lab was born. Not from a tidy product roadmap, but from the lived mess of planning events that matter to real people.

This manual is not a feature catalogue. You can click buttons and discover those yourself. What this is, instead, is a way of thinking about event planning as three connected disciplines — vision, logistics, and revenue — that feed each other in ways most tools pretend do not exist.

Read it front to back on a quiet evening, or open it mid-crisis when you need to remember why you structured your tickets that way. Either works. The Lab does not judge.

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## The Shape of the Lab

Twelve modules. Three phases. One file that never phones home.

Phase 1 is called Vision, and it contains four modules: the Event Canvas, Attendee Personas, Ticket Tiers, and Promotional Copywriter. These are where you answer the dangerous questions — who is this for, why should they care, and what are you actually offering? Most event disasters trace back to a vague answer in Phase 1.

Phase 2 is Logistics. Speaker Pipeline, Schedule Builder, Venue and Vendors, Risk Register. This is the operational engine: who is on stage, when, where, and what happens when the projector catches fire.

Phase 3 is Revenue. Sponsorship Pipeline, Ticket Sales Tracker, Event Budget, and the Post-Event Report. Money in, money out, and what you learned — all pulling data from the modules above.

Here is the quiet trick: data flows downstream. Change your ticket prices and watch the Budget tab recalculate. Confirm a speaker and the Schedule reflects it. Log a batch of sales and the Post-Event Report already knows your attendance numbers. You enter information once. The Lab carries it everywhere it needs to go.

## The Canvas and the Courage to Be Specific

The Event Canvas is nine cells on a page. It looks simple. It is not.

Most people fill in the Event Vision box with something like 'a great conference for marketers.' And that is the exact moment their event starts dying. Not dramatically — slowly, like a plant you forgot to water.

Great events are specific. They are 'a 200-person, two-day summit for B2B content marketers who are tired of being told to just make more TikToks.' That sentence has a size, a duration, an audience, a frustration, and an attitude. It is something you can actually build.

When you fill in the Canvas, be ruthless. The Target Audience cell should make you uncomfortable with how narrow it is. The Unique Value cell should answer a question nobody else is answering. The Ticket Strategy cell should already hint at your pricing psychology.

If you cannot fill in a cell with genuine specificity, that is not a failure of the tool. It is a signal that you have more thinking to do before you book a venue.

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## Who Shows Up (And Why They Almost Did Not)

Attendee Personas are borrowed from marketing, but event personas need something extra: a reason to leave the house.

Your Industry Professional persona is not just '35-45, mid-career, works in tech.' They are a person who has attended three conferences this year, been disappointed by two of them, and is now deeply sceptical of any event that uses the word 'synergy' in its promotional copy. They will buy a ticket only if they believe they will meet someone who can solve a problem they cannot Google.

That is the persona you need to write. Not a demographic snapshot — a decision story.

The four fields in the Personas module — demographics, goals, willingness to pay, and discovery channel — look straightforward, but each one is a trapdoor into harder questions. If you do not know where your ideal attendee discovers events, you do not know how to reach them, which means your brilliant marketing plan is just a beautiful fiction.

Fill these in honestly. Then read them aloud to someone who was not in the room when you wrote them. If they do not immediately understand who this person is, rewrite.

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## Tickets Are Not Prices. Tickets Are Promises.

An early bird ticket at ninety-nine dollars is not a cheaper version of your standard ticket. It is a contract. You are saying: trust me before the speaker lineup is confirmed, before the schedule is published, before a single testimonial exists — and I will reward that trust with a better price.

That is an extraordinary thing to ask of a stranger.

The Ticket Tiers module asks you to define price, capacity, inclusions, and estimated sales for each tier. The inclusions field is where most people get lazy. 'General admission' is not an inclusion. It is the absence of one. What does your ticket actually give someone? Access to which rooms? Which meals? The networking drinks? The recordings afterward?

Every tier should have a clear answer to the question: 'What do I get that the tier below me does not?' If you cannot answer that cleanly, you do not have tiers. You have confusion.

The projected revenue calculation at the bottom of the module is not a forecast. It is a stress test. If your best-case ticket revenue does not cover your venue deposit, you need to know that now — not in month three.

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## Writing Copy That Does Not Sound Like Copy

The Promotional Copywriter module has six fields: event name, dates, location, tagline, description, social blurb, and a call to action. That is it. No AI, no templates. Just you and a blinking cursor.

Here is what most event copy sounds like: 'Join us for an unmissable day of insights, networking, and inspiration.' Here is what that actually communicates: nothing. Every event in history has claimed to offer insights, networking, and inspiration. You have said precisely zero things that differentiate you.

Try this instead. Write the tagline as if you are texting a friend who asked what your event is about. Write the description as if you are explaining it to someone who has never attended any event, ever. Write the social blurb as if you have exactly one chance to stop someone mid-scroll.

The live preview at the bottom of the module shows you how it reads to a stranger. Look at it with cold eyes. Does it make you want to attend? Not 'does it accurately describe the event' — does it make you feel something?

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## PHASE 2 — LOGISTICS

# Speakers Are Not Decoration

The Speaker Pipeline tracks people through four stages: wishlist, invited, confirmed, declined. That linear progression hides a truth about speaker management that nobody talks about: the hardest part is not getting a yes. It is knowing what to do with a no.

When a dream keynote declines, most planners panic and book whoever is available. That is how you end up with a programme that feels like a Spotify shuffle playlist — technically varied, emotionally random.

Before you send a single invitation, fill in your Canvas's Speaker Strategy cell. What kind of speakers does your event need? Not want — need. A technical conference needs practitioners who have built things, not thought leaders who have tweeted about them. A creative festival needs provocateurs, not motivational speakers reading from slides.

Track fees in the pipeline, and watch what happens to your budget. Speaker costs have a way of silently consuming forty percent of your total spend if nobody is counting.

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# The Schedule Is a Story

The Schedule Builder lets you add time slots with a title, duration, track, and room. Then it renders a Gantt-style timeline so you can see the shape of your day.

Here is the thing about schedules: they are not spreadsheets. They are narratives. Your opening slot sets the emotional tone. Your mid-morning break is either a networking opportunity or a dead zone. Your closing session is either a crescendo or a whimper.

The best events have a rhythm — energetic sessions followed by reflective ones, big-room keynotes followed by intimate workshops. The timeline view in the Lab lets you see that rhythm visually. If your Gantt chart looks like an even grid of identical blocks, your schedule has no pulse.

One more thing. Build in more buffer time than you think you need. Events never run ahead of schedule. They always run behind.

# The Vendors You Forget Will Forget You

Venue and Vendors is the unglamorous heart of event planning. Nobody posts about their AV supplier on LinkedIn. But when the microphone dies mid-keynote, it is the only relationship that matters.

The module tracks eight vendor categories — venue, catering, AV, photography, print, transport, staffing, and other. For each, you log the cost, booking status, and notes.

The notes field is the most important one. That is where you record the name of your contact person, the deposit terms, the cancellation clause, and the thing they said on the phone that made you slightly nervous. Six months from now, when something goes wrong, those notes are your institutional memory.

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## Risks Are Not Pessimism. Risks Are Respect.

The Risk Register asks three questions about each potential problem: how likely is it, how bad would it be, and what is your plan?

Most people skip this module because it feels negative. As if naming a risk makes it more likely to happen. The opposite is true. The events that go catastrophically wrong are always the ones where nobody asked 'what if?' in advance.

Start with the defaults: speaker cancellation, bad weather (for outdoor events), tech failure, low ticket sales, permit issues. Then add the risks specific to your context. Running an event in a city you have never visited? Add 'unfamiliarity with local suppliers.' First-time event with no brand recognition? Add 'below-target sponsorship revenue.'

The mitigation field is where the real work happens. 'Have a backup plan' is not mitigation. 'Maintain a shortlist of three local speakers who can fill a 30-minute slot on 48 hours notice' is mitigation.

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### PHASE 3 — REVENUE

## Sponsors Want Audiences, Not Logos

The Sponsorship Pipeline uses tiered levels — Platinum, Gold, Silver, Bronze, In-Kind — because that is the language sponsors understand. But the module's real power is in the Deliverables field.

When a sponsor says 'I want visibility,' what they mean is 'I want access to your audience in a way that feels natural and does not make me look desperate.' A logo on a lanyard does not do that. A sponsored workshop where the sponsor's team solves a real problem for attendees does.

Fill in the Deliverables field with specifics. Not 'logo placement' but 'logo on main stage backdrop, dedicated email to attendee list two weeks before event, five-minute product demo between afternoon sessions.' Sponsors who see specific deliverables close faster than sponsors who see vague tier names.

Track pipeline vs. confirmed revenue. If your pipeline is five times your confirmed amount three months out, you are in trouble. Sponsorship deals take longer to close than you think.

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## The Sales That Tell You Everything

The Ticket Sales Tracker is deliberately simple: log a batch with date, quantity, tier, and source. That is it. But the patterns in those four fields will tell you more about your event than any survey.

If your early bird tier sells out in a week but your standard tier stalls, your standard price is too high — or your early bird was too low. If most sales come from email but almost none from social media, your social strategy is not converting. If you are logging 'comp' tickets more than you expected, you need to have an uncomfortable conversation with yourself about how much free admission you can actually afford.

The capacity bar at the top tells you one essential truth: how full you are. Below fifty percent with a month to go? Time to activate emergency marketing. Above ninety percent with six weeks left? Consider releasing more tickets or upgrading the venue.

This module feeds directly into Budget. Every sale is revenue. Every comp ticket is potential revenue you chose not to collect.

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## Budget Is Where Fiction Meets Reality

The Event Budget module pulls ticket revenue and sponsorship revenue automatically. You add cost categories — venue, AV, speakers, marketing, staffing, contingency — with allocated and spent amounts.

The profit or loss number at the bottom is the most honest number in your entire event. It does not care about your vision statement. It does not care about your beautiful programme. It tells you, in one figure, whether your event is financially viable.

If it is red, look at your biggest cost categories first. Can you negotiate a better venue deal? Can you reduce speaker fees by offering exposure to a larger audience? Can you cut a marketing channel that is not converting?

Always — always — include a contingency line. Ten to fifteen percent of total costs. Events generate surprises with the reliability of sunrise. The contingency is not a luxury. It is the difference between a problem and a crisis.

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## CLOSING

# After the Applause

The Post-Event Report generates itself, mostly. It pulls attendance, revenue, speaker count, and budget data from every other module. You add four things: a satisfaction score, what went well, what you learned, and what attendees said.

This is not a formality. This is the most valuable document your event will produce.

Because next year — or next quarter, or next month — you will sit down to plan another event. And the version of you who remembers exactly what went wrong, exactly what surprised you, and exactly what the audience loved? That version of you is a better event planner than the version who is starting from scratch.

Write the report while the event is still warm in your memory. Be honest. Be specific. The lessons you capture in this module are the lessons that make your next event better.

And when you open The Event Lab again for that next event, you will find your data waiting. Saved locally, never uploaded, entirely yours. That is the quiet promise of the Lab: your work stays with you, ready for the next time someone has an idea worth gathering people around.

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# A Few Things Nobody Tells You

Save early and export often. The Lab saves to your browser automatically, but browsers clear storage sometimes. Use the Files tab to export a JSON backup after every major work session. Name it with the date. Keep them all.

The keyboard shortcut Ctrl+S (or Cmd+S on Mac) triggers an export immediately. Use it like a nervous habit.

Light and dark mode exist because some of you plan events at midnight on a laptop in bed (dark mode), and some of you plan events at 9am in a shared office with the sun streaming in (light mode). No judgement either way.

Every module has a help link in the top-right corner. Click it when you forget what a field does. The help system is not a tutorial — it is a reference. Quick, specific, and designed to get you back to work in under thirty seconds.

Finally: the Lab is a single HTML file. You can copy it to a USB stick, email it to a colleague, or keep it in a folder with your event photos. It will work in any modern browser, on any operating system. No account. No subscription. No terms of service.

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The Event Lab · Hybrid Toolkit v1.0 · 2026  
Set in Crimson Text. Runs offline. Your data stays yours.