



THE INSTITUTION OF FIRE ENGINEERS

Founded 1918 • Incorporated 1924

IFE BRANCH ACTIVITY HANDBOOK

Welcome to the IFE Branch Activity Handbook

Branch activity is vital to the success and recognition of the IFE. With this handbook we aim to provide you with tips on how you can increase IFE recognition and loyalty, and endorse IFEs values in your activities.

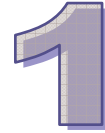
We have focused on event management, and hope you find this to be an easily accessible guide to delivering high quality events to our members, whilst working within our corporate guidelines to enhance the IFE.

It is through branch activity that we can communicate developments within the IFE and within the Fire Engineering world, and it is your commitment to maintaining and promoting this essential communications channel to IFE members.

I hope you find this handbook to be of help when planning your events, Our aim is to provide best practice tips that can be applied to all activities. Therefore any feedback you may have on this handbook would be gratefully received.

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IFE Values

The five values identified as core to the IFE should direct us in all our activities and behaviours. They are customer focussed, professional, innovative, accountable and open.

Customer focused

- The customer perspective is critical to everything that we do at the IFE.
- When planning an event always keep the needs of your target audience in mind; aim to produce an event which our members will find both interesting and enjoyable.
- Simple efficient processes are essential in our drive to exceed customer expectations. Planning events thoroughly can help us achieve this.
- Friendly and supportive service improves perception of the organisation.

Professional

- All planning and decisions made should be based on a sound knowledge of the market place, and driven by the wish to maximise resources available
- Best practice is fundamental to the IFE; this can be achieved by continuous review and improvement of our own activities, and by ensuring our activities in all areas meet our high standards
- Well organised and commercially astute events portray professionalism.

Innovative

- IFE encourages creativity and new ideas. In order to meet the needs of today's market place we must anticipate the needs of our customers and tailor our activities accordingly.
- Maintaining an aspirational outlook ensures that we think beyond the issues of today and remain competitive and relevant, e.g. when choosing a theme for an event think about current topical issues.

Accountable

- We should always portray the same consistently high standards in all our activities.
- Responsibility and ownership tasks should be both encouraged and rewarded
- Measurement is key in maintaining our high standards - encourage feedback for attendees at your events to assess whether you meet the needs of your customers

Open

- IFE is built on honesty, openness and integrity. By encouraging ideas, sharing information, and teamwork, we are able to learn from a wide range of experiences and maximise our success.
- Effective communication is key to ensuring that information and knowledge is distributed and made available to all that need it – make sure you use all channels available to promote your events, and share information across the branch network that others may find useful, e.g. the name of a good speaker
- It is only through honesty and consistency that we maintain the trust and loyalty of our members, students and customers.

Organising your events calendar

You want your events to be professional, well organised and add value to our members. To achieve this it takes a considerable amount of thought and time. Be realistic about the commitment that will be needed throughout the year, and consider if and how this commitment can be incorporated into your existing work and life schedule. No matter what the scale of the event, it is essential that you have time to plan. Don't try to do too much. A small number of well organised events is better than a large number of poorly managed ones.

Budgeting for the year:

When you are planning your events calendar for the year ahead you will need to plan your budget accordingly. To ensure you allocate sufficient budget to cover the costs for each event you may need to consider the following:

- Are you looking to just make a contribution to costs, break even or make a profit?
- Are you able to obtain a sponsor for the event?
- Can you charge for attendance, and if so, how much?
- Are you providing refreshments (venues should provide guidance on costs for these)?
- Do you need costly audio visual equipment (venues will often provide these facilities and so many may also provide guidance on these costs)?
- What kind of promotion are you planning e.g. fliers, mailings, e-mail or advertising?
- Will you pay a fee to the speaker, or offer to pay their expenses?
- Will the resources that you have committed get you the results you are after? Always consider the return on your investment

Make sure you address these questions to ensure that your event calendar is realistic and falls within your budget of the year.

When planning your events calendar consider the following key points:

- Choosing a topic – agree on a theme for each event first. This will help to determine your objectives and to define your planning
- Set objectives and goals – clearly identify what you want to achieve throughout the year. Make sure your objectives are in line with IFE values.
- Other events – avoid planning events on the days when other events are being held, either locally or nationally by IFE. Consider whether there may be opportunities to combine events with other branches. Also research national or regional public events that may affect attendance.
- Timing – try to organise events during school holidays or bank holidays as this is likely to affect attendance rates. Also try to avoid holding events on a Monday or Friday as attendance is generally less on these days. Be flexible and consider business breakfast or a lunchtime event as an alternative to an evening event.

How to pick a topic for your event

As a starting point, consider the needs and interests of your audience, our members.

- What are the main issues affecting Fire Engineers?
- What are the 'hot' topics currently covered by the media?
- Look to future trends, be innovative and think outside the box
- Choose a topic that will inspire your audience; give your audience an enjoyable and educational experience that will generate debate.
- Don't just repeat last year's programme as the themes may well be outdated.
- Why not carry out some research? Ask the members in your area what topics they would like to hear about. The IFE's International Technical Network may be able to offer you guidance in choosing a topical theme.
- If your chosen topic is already well known try presenting it from a different angle, such as selecting an interesting venue and combining a presentation with a visit.
- Don't book a high profile speaker simply because they are available and assume their status will create enough interest in the event. Choose the topic first, and ensure it will be relevant to your audience – even with a lesser known speaker this is more likely to encourage interest. Events should be built upon one key theme to ensure they will be successful.
- Try to vary presentations with interactive sessions or workshops – this will help keep people's interest higher for longer periods of time.

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How to locate a speaker

After you have identified the key objectives and theme for your event, your next step is to find a speaker. A speaker may also be able to give you feedback on venues they have previously attended and so also prove helpful in your venue selection. Consider the following to assist you in your search:

- Are there any prominent companies relevant to your chosen topic based in your local area? They may consider providing a speaker as it could be viewed as giving something back to the community and may gain press coverage.
- Speak to members in your area. They may be able to recommend a speaker they have heard at another event, or there may be someone within their organisation who would be willing to present.
- Look to your area or branch to locate prominent industry specialists
- Should you be seeking sponsorship for your event, see if the sponsor has any existing contacts for you to exploit.
- Contact other branches – they may be able to recommend a speaker that they have used at an event.
- Not everyone feels comfortable with the idea of speaking in front of large audiences. If your preferred speaker expresses concern about this, why not suggest running the event in an alternative format, such as a workshop session with break out groups?
- What is it about a speaker that makes them interesting to our members? When considering a speaker, find out if anyone you know has heard them before, as they may be able to give you feedback on their style and quality of public speaking.
- Request a biography and details of a speakers experience to help assess their suitability. This will also assist with future promotions for the event.

Briefing your speaker

Your speaker must be fully briefed prior to the event – don't make any assumptions when it comes to the information they require. To ensure there is no room for error always consult the speaker on the following:

- Directions to the venue, including a map, information on transport links and parking facilities
- Contact details for both the venue and event organiser prior to the day of the event
- Format and style of the event, including information on how many delegates are expected, what their level of experience will be (e.g. student, member, or guest, providing job titles if possible as they can be a good indicator of experience) and what delegates expectation will be
- Content they are required to cover at the event – include information on IFE key messages and provide copies of promotional material for the event
- When they are expected to speak and the length of time allocated to their presentation
- Presentation format – if they are speaking as a representative of IFE and will be using a PowerPoint presentation this will need to be formatted in the IFE Corporate Template. To request this contact download from the IFE Members Area – Secure Document Area. (www.ife.org.uk)
- Expenses (if any) that you will cover. Be clear about the limitations that you apply, e.g. will you cover standard class of travel only? Also provide information on how they will be reimbursed – will you organise travel and accommodation or should they invoice you after the event?
- Request a biography to help when introducing the speaker and in promoting the event
- Check the speakers audio visual requirements – from both a logistical and financial point of view.
- Do you need to provide any copies of the presentation as handouts? If so request a copy of the speakers presentation prior to the event.

Always confirm the above information in writing

Where to hold your event

Sourcing a venue is made easier by using the Internet, whilst local and national directories are also a useful search tool. Venue finding companies can be used as an alternative – and they will often charge the venue rather than the user for their services.

These days the majority of hotels are equipped to conduct conferences and company events, but always consider alternative venues such as businesses premises, your sponsors premises or local attractions.

Think about choosing an unusual venue – this can attract members and add value to their experience. An innovative choice of venue can be additional incentive for some people to attend the event.

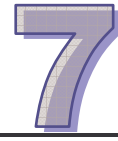
When searching for a venue keep the following in mind:

- Attractiveness, quality, age and available facilities of your venue
- Transport links, accessibility and car parking
- Size in relation to meeting rooms, space for exhibition stands and breakout rooms
- Seating layouts required for your event
- Availability of audio visual equipment and whether this is included in the venue hire fee, or whether there is an extra charge for use
- Cost – venues can be expensive to hire, but some seemingly expensive hotels charge competitive daily delegate rates, or disregard room charges entirely if they are catering for the event.

Before making a final choice on a venue, visit those you have short listed, if possible making the visit at the same time of the day that you will be running your event. Assess whether the event reflects IFE values and so strengthens our brand image, e.g. is it modern and innovative and does the venues event team appear organised and professional in their conduct?

Once you are certain it meets your needs and does reflect the IFE brand, confirm in writing (including e-mail) – and continue to agree all confirmed actions/ key points in writing until the start of the event. This will ensure there is no confusion over the terms of the venue hire.

Do find out if there is a cancellation fee and the venue's terms and conditions if you decide not to go ahead with the event – there is always a possibility that for some reason not enough people will register for your event.



Who to invite to an event

Depending on the topic, it is not always appropriate to target your event at the widest possible audience. Sometimes focusing on a particular industry or, for example, running student only events can be just as successful whilst being more cost effective in promoting the event.

Identifying your target audience:

- Who will be attracted to the event?
- Is the event exclusively for members or are guests invited?
- Invite members from outside your branch's borders, as this will increase numbers and networking opportunities

Examples of specific target markets could be:

- Subject matter, e.g. professional development, IFE Register of Fire Risk Assessors and Auditors
- Student event, e.g. case studies, exam revision
- Age groups

How to promote your event

It is important to promote your event to generate interest in attending. Use the following tips for promoting your event:

- Use newsletters to your advantage: promote your event through this resource. Find out what the speaker is going to cover and what will attract people to the event. Include this in the advertisement; it may sometimes be possible to have an article on a large or unique event in the Fire Prevention and Fire Engineers Journal.
- Events that will take time out of the working day require further notice – start your promotion earlier!
- Use IFE's central e-mail database to remind people about your event*.
- If the mailing budget allows, use the membership database and mail a flyer to the members in your Branch or Area*.
- Ensure details of your event are put on the IFE website*.
- Speak to other professional bodies that may have publications in which you can advertise or a targeted list you can rent.

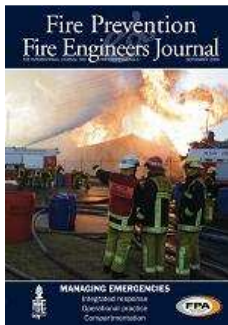
All promotional materials should be produced by IFE HQ to ensure a consistent brand image is represented at all events.

* contact info@ife.org.uk for further information

Fire Prevention and Fire Engineers Journal

All IFE branches are entitled to 1/8 of a page free in the Fire Prevention and Fire Engineers Journal. Branches also receive a discounted rate for larger adverts.

For information on advertising opportunities, please contact:



Wendy Otway
Publishing & Exhibition services
Old Coach Station
38 Preston Street
Faversham
Kent ME13 8PE
Tel: +44 (0)1795 538792
Fax: +44 (0)871 433 5043
E-mail: wendy.otway@pexs.net



Obtaining good PR locally

There is a fine art to attracting good PR; telling people what you are doing without any interesting angle will not be enough to 'hook' media interest. Look for ways to present your event; innovative, controversial, new (never been done in this way before) and exclusive (not been announced to anyone as yet).

You need to:

- Know the local media – develop relationships with the relevant journalists and understand what they are looking for
- Identify your target publications – is the local press appropriate or are there publications run by local trade associations or business links that might be more effective?
- Pre-plan where possible, and give your event a slant that makes it newsworthy e.g. try an unusual event
- Avoid wasting press time – only release stories that have genuine news appeal, such as stories on interesting speakers or well known local organisations, award schemes, workshops, or newly released research on business, regional or local related issues.
- Avoid lying to gain press coverage
- Issue your release whilst the news is hot
- Provide photographs where possible
- Provide a contact phone number and e-mail address and have someone available to speak to the press at all times.
- Use a local speaker where possible – this will often generate press coverage at events which otherwise may not attract attention.
- Maximise your sponsor – if you are working with a sponsor on an event, try to exploit their PR department. Alternatively can your sponsor provide an angle that would make your event more newsworthy?
- Be prepared to start off in a small way and build relationships with journalists to make the most of future stories
- Be transparent and open – once you have made contact with the press be prepared to answer their follow-up questions.
- Establish regular contact with the PR officers of all local business and management organisations. Explore opportunities for joint ventures as well as exchange of invitations to meetings and events.

Finding a sponsor

Sponsorship for your event needs to be built into the planning of the event itself and the more lead time you have to find and sell sponsorship the better. It is rare that a company will make a hurried decision to sponsor an event at the financial level you ultimately require.

Sponsorship relationships take time and effort to service. If you are planning events a year in advance, you should consider sponsorship possibilities at this point also. Most companies compile their sponsorship budget during their budgeting period. In addition many companies consolidate their budgets towards the end of the financial year and tend to look to spend any budget remaining at this time.

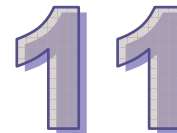
The ideal partnership is where both parties receive value for money, meet organisational objectives and generate long term benefit from being involved in any activity.

It is IFE's sponsorship policy to develop long term mutually beneficial business to business relationships as opposed to one off sponsorship deals. The ideal scenario would be to pitch a group of event sponsorship opportunities to the same sponsor at a preferable rate, cutting down administration and servicing time.

Typically, a sponsor will be interested in one or more of the following:

- Networking opportunities: physical interface at an event and the opportunity to sell their products and services face to face.
- Direct mailing: to piggy back on a targeted mailing reaching potential customers
- Co-branded relationship: organisations who want to build an association with the IFE to build their own profile and develop areas of business.

Use this information to determine whether or not sponsorship is a feasible option for the various events that you organise, and if so what types or levels of companies you could approach and the amount you should be able to obtain.



CPD Procedures

- 1) All applications for CPD should be made on the appropriate form and sent to IFE HQ. Application forms are available from <http://www.ife.org.uk/professional/>
- 2) IFE HQ will record the receipt of the application and will forward it to the General Assembly (GA) Member in whose area the event is to be held. In the case where the event is being organised by the GA Member the application should be forwarded to the GA member for an adjacent area.
- 3) The GA Member will then review the content of the proposal to ensure the subject, and standard are sufficient to warrant CPD allocation by the IFE.

If the subject is deemed not to be suitable the GA Member should contact the applicant for clarification. If the content is still deemed to be unsuitable, the application should be returned to IFE HQ who will inform the applicant.

An appeal can be made through IFE HQ to the Portfolio Holder of the Professional Standards Steering Group.
- 4) The GA Member will then calculate the amount of CPD to be allocated using the following criteria and the approved form:
 - (i) Review the proposed programme and add all the time allocated to direct input of the programme topic;
 - (ii) Add a realistic period for open forum and/or discussions;
 - (iii) Add (i) and (ii) and round to the nearest half hour.
- 5) The GA Member then completes the approved form, signs it and returns it to IFE HQ.
- 6) IFE HQ inform the applicant of the amount of CPD allocated.

Notes added by IFE Secretariat

IFE Secretariat request that if at all possible applications are submitted using the approved form via email to helen.griffiths@ife.org.uk. GA members can request a blank electronic version of the form from this email address.

Applicants can claim CPD funds in one year up to a total of £1 for each branch member (for example, if branch has 200 members, they can claim a total of £200 during the year towards approved CPD events (branch membership figures available from IFE Secretariat).

Branches will receive an electronic copy of a CPD hours logo which they can use on publicity material and/or certificates for approved CPD events.

A standard CPD certificate in electronic format is available for use by branches if they require it.

Cpdprocess/Feb06