

WHAT ARE THE ESSENTIAL THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN ORGANISING A PR EVENT?

The retailer >

Felicia Brocklebank, partner, Papillon

My partners Nicole Robinson and Maggie Snouck, who founded children's shoe store Papillon, and I started planning the launch party for our new flagship store at 98 Marylebone Lane about three months before. We wanted to invite a mix of high-profile people, journalists, potential customers as well as our loyal customers and friends. A great mix of fun people is always key to a good party and we searched our client database and personal address books as well as getting help from our PR company. We decided to have a children's enchanted tea party, and a professional party organiser helped us transform the store into a beautiful setting with bird cages filled with butterflies and intertwined with flowers, a variety of floral arrangements, and little chicks, rabbits and ducklings in the window. The centre piece was a large round table laden with fairy cakes and jam scones with tea served in vintage china cups. We tried to include our Papillon logo and brand colours as much as possible in everything. We created a children's area downstairs where they could play in a safe, contained, supervised area. We had hoped to have an ice-cream van and candy floss machine on the pavement but sadly that was forbidden by the council. In the end we had the candy floss machine inside and the ice cream was offered round in cups. Planning a good party takes time and effort as well as the ability to improvise at the last minute. It's also essential to make it as much fun as possible.



The brand

Cleo Barbour, Brand founder and designer, Cleo B

We started planning our last event, the new store opening, about six weeks before. There was so much to organise, from the DJs to choosing the right caterer and canapés. We liaised over several weeks to ensure that the femininity and personality of the brand was conveyed, as were elements of the current s/s10 collection. We put together a guest list that had a mix of influential industry insiders, celebrity shoe lovers and close friends and family. All aspects of the evening were established around attracting the right crowd and showcasing the Cleo B brand ethos at the party – we wanted it to be feminine and fun! We created a stunning invite that had a real impact when it landed in people's hands. We worked closely with our PR agency Boudoir PR who put together the creative for the event and ensured that the evening ran smoothly. We fitted a turquoise (signature Cleo B colour!) carpet outside of the store and roped off this area – it was important to make sure the Cleo B party was kept within the store vicinity and we didn't overrun the street too much. The event was a great success, we had so many people attend including key media contacts who viewed both the current s/s season and forthcoming a/w season collections, and so along with celebrating the boutique, it was a great opportunity for everyone to have a sneak peek at the new range.



< The PR guru

Lorraine Worsley, managing director of Countess Publicists

The last event I was involved in was with my client Emma Stanworth, owner of Poshu Boutiques in Whalley, Lancashire. Emma and her staff get very involved in their events and once we even had two in one week. Depending on the size of the event, anything over six weeks is a luxury in terms of planning but sometimes you have to be reactive – if a celebrity is in town and we can organise something in 24 hours for them to attend at one of our clients' venues – then it's go, go, go! A good mix of people is important and a good publicist should have a current and high-profile contact list covering all sectors as it is as important to have heads of business as it is to have celebrities, clients and customers – they are all vital, as are the press. I never rely on the press to attend, though, as something can happen seconds before and they are deployed somewhere else, so one of my important guests is our photographer so photos are available to use immediately. This is very important as a missed shot is a missed opportunity for future press initiatives. Planning and more planning are essential. Key tips: have a list and don't accept flaky responses from any service provider; always expect guests to be early and ensure all staff know exactly what is expected of them; expect something not to go to plan, make sure you have a contingency plan; and, of course, wear comfortable shoes and a smile at all times!

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