



Big Picture The in Rentals

by Susan I. Shiber

When event guests and meeting attendees gather with hundreds or even thousands of people, they rarely consider tents, seats, tables and accessories. They are excited by what awaits and eager to network, dine or help raise funds.

The fact that everything is perfectly placed and attractively arranged may not be given a great deal of thought. However, if these attributes were less than ideal, nearly everyone would notice and be abuzz with disapproval. Planners, though talented, creative and sticklers for detail, call on diverse rental companies to help them make the magic.

According to A to Z Party Rental president Melani Kodikian, sequence of steps in a large event makes all the difference in installation effectiveness. “Our crews need to know what to do first, last and throughout. It’s important because event coordinators and others have specific timelines for each tent and other equipment. We must correspond with those agendas.”

A to Z Party Rental is among the best providers of supplies and equipment for major events. With origins as a tool provider dating back to 1968, the company grew significantly after adding party rentals and closing its construction department. Today, it boasts an excellent staff and 28,000-square feet of space filled with a wide variety of inventory.

Melani Kodikian, president of this Montgomeryville, PA-based firm, enjoys the busy tempo of summer and autumn. A time of year replete with festivals. “Outdoor events attract 500 to 2,000 or more people and often run for multiple days. We provide tenting, tables, chairs, cooking equipment, coolers and more. Benchmark Event Services, our bleacher division, supplies outdoor seating for everything from horse shows to pig roasts.”

A to Z conducts extensive research to determine location restrictions, installation challenges, timing, accessibility and project execution strategy. From load-in to load-out, meticulous care is taken throughout each step.

A recent festival exemplifies the stellar company’s expertise and infinite attention to detail.

“There were 24 tents ranging in size from 9-feet by 10-feet to 50-feet by 110-feet,” reports Kodikian. “Installation and tear down spanned six days. Numerous factors, such as sequence, allowable truck routes within the grounds and other intricate specifics, had to be accurately addressed. Communication was and always is vital to the success of any huge event.”

Kodikian notes that she has observed an increasing industry trend over the past two years. "Committees mounting major events are larger and price shopping is more prevalent. This helps keep the industry honest. We emphasize our reputation and quality when clients tell us they can get products for less. Cheaper may not be better and we urge them to focus on our history, proficiency and superior brand," she sums up.

Another veteran company in the industry is Party Rental Ltd. "We are a true mom-and-pop company, which was founded 45 years go," says Debbie Barnes, business development manager for the firm. "Consistent service is the hallmark of our company, which is why we are now one of the largest rental firms in the east. Party Rental is available 24-hours a day, seven days a week - and that includes pickup and delivery."

"Our technology is state-of-the-art. Computer systems connect to our warehouse and clients can place orders online," continues Barnes. "Our designs are consistently tweaked and expanded, while our selection of linens, tables, flatware, china and catering equipment is the largest in the country. With the integration of AllSeated into our line, planners can create CAD schematics featuring our products."

Huge functions are Party Rental Ltd.'s forte. In May, Robin Hood Foundation enlisted the company's services for their annual benefit, which was held at the Javits Center in New York. With more than 4,000 guests, \$54.5 million was raised to help care for men, women and children living in poverty.

Party Rental Ltd.'s role in the event was impressive. Twelve tractor trailers supplied equipment in sequence for six kitchens and several other areas. "Quantities were staggering," recalls Barnes. "Imagine 25,000 glasses, 12,000 plates and accompanying flatware, 4,000 chairs, 400-plus tables and on and on. Our team's logistical prowess went into overdrive for this one."

Of all the things that can go wrong when mounting a monumental event, the crisis most often faced by planners is running out of linens. Accidents happen. Extra guests show up, a problem Arvene Kilby, president of Let's Do Linens, says absolutely always occurs within the last 48 hours of a major affair. She suggests ordering more than required. Another solution is to stock a supply of white and black cloths, overlays and napkins, which can be added to tables when the motif is traditional.



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When renting supplies for a large event, Party Rental, Ltd. business development manager, Debbie Barnes offers some helpful tips:

- Place the order early enough to be sure the rental company has the inventory needed or can purchase it in time for the event.
- Be sure the rental company has large event experience to ensure it knows the manpower and trucking needed to accomplish delivery in an organized, timely manner.
- Check to make sure the rental company will have an experienced point person at the delivery site to answer any questions or make last minute decisions.
- If the delivery location is a union house, the rental company must ascertain special requirements prior to delivery, such as palletizing and/or shrink-wrapping equipment.
- If fork lifts are being used to off load trucks, be sure equipment is packed correctly to accomplish this.
- If there are several load-in points (to expedite the delivery) make sure the rental company is aware in advance, so trucks are filled in sequence.
- Timing is critical in the load in/load out of large events. The production company must be specific on the time frames allowed for delivery/pickup.

The fundraiser featured four color stories - lemon, chartreuse, maize, apple green - and Party Rental Ltd. enhanced the themes with linens. In addition, the versatile rental giant constructed a custom bar and dotted the area with loft tables it crafts in house.

“We listen to our clients and that’s why enormous events like this one are flawless,” raves Barnes.

CORT, too, burgeoned from humble beginnings and in 45 years has become the nation’s leading provider of transition services, including event furnishings services. In addition to more than 100 offices, showrooms and clearance centers across the United States, it provides furniture rentals around the globe. From Super Bowl to Nuclear Security Summit, CORT has it covered, seated, tabled and greened.

Sarah Mainhart, strategic account manager for CORT, assists planners and designers in bringing giant events to life. “The trend in some of our largest events is the desire to feel at home. People no longer want to sit at banquet tables or in classroom-style auditoriums. Frequently, we set up a ballroom to resemble 20 or more little living rooms, complete with sofa, table and two chairs. Or, we mix and match 60-inch rounds with banquet chairs, high tops with bar stools or any number of combinations and styles. When guests enter the room, they easily find a spot that meets their taste. It’s all about making folks feel comfortable.”

Mainhart points out that greenery and environmental touches are very popular. More organic, earthy looks with varied textiles and pops of color are sought. Elements of wood and lush

vegetation present natural settings and sustainable themes.

"Another trend frequently found in massive events is powered furnishings," she reveals. "Many of our products are wired with charging capabilities for mobile devices, which enable attendees to SnapChat and Instagram throughout an event. Planners don't want people leaving a session to charge a device."

AFR® is a national furniture rental company with five divisions, including: Residential, Commercial, Special Events, Trade Show and Clearance Centers, and has 22 distribution centers. This breadth of size and service represents 90-times the size the company was when it launched in 1975 as a residential furniture company in Philadelphia, PA.

AFR exhibited its extreme talent coupled with brand and product awareness earlier this year at McCormick Place in Chicago, IL. Lauren Goldberg, northeast regional sales manager for AFR, explains. "We held an Experiential Marketing Summit to showcase three options of our furnishings and seating to 1,500-plus people. In the front of the room, white soft seating starred. Highlights included club chairs, empire seating, Hylton tablet tables and individual sofas.

"The middle of the room replicated AFR colors of blue and white in silk-back chairs and cushions," she continues. "We actually created our logo in a pattern of color. Anyone who walked in immediately knew it was AFR. The back of the room was a vision in sophistication - again in blue and white. Sofas paired with cocktail tables dramatized the space. Response to the event was amazing. People are always looking for new ways to present their organizations' brand and our displays excited them. This is something every company can do with ease."

AFR's Experiential Marketing Summit personifies industry advancement. Other differences influencing rentals are tighter deadlines and the proliferation of

Lauren Goldberg, AFR northeast regional sales manager, advises planners to have everything in place and a clear vision of colors, floor plans and schematics before meeting with a rental company to avoid a lot of going back and forth. Details from how many people should be seated to individual themes within an event should be presented in a total package to ensure perfection from start to finish.

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pop-up events. “Speed networking is big,” says Goldberg. “We may create six-to-ten groupings designed for individual brainstorming and interaction. A guest spends a short time exploring one topic and then moves on to the next pod to delve into another.”

After tents and equipment are in place, highlight and color take center stage. Whether classic or exploding with pizzazz, Let’s Do Linens exhilarates the setting.

Introduced 25 years ago with a staff of three, one truck and a washer and dryer, the business has catapulted to heady heights. Employees now number as many as 62 in peak seasons and its fleet consists of 14 trucks, vans and cargo vehicles to serve clients in a 200-mile radius of northern New Jersey. UPS handles the balance of the country.

Arvene Kilby, president of Let’s Do Linens, is devoted to making event rental clients look their very best.

“It’s a joy,” she exalts. “We get to celebrate something wonderful every day. This is an honor and having a loyal base of repeat customers is humbling.”

Kilby eloquently shares some of the latest fashion statements in her industry. “Food stations are becoming works of art woven in and out of tables in beautiful colors and patterns. Metallic gold is making a comeback. People are even using it with lighter colors. Sometimes we’re asked to make bling the primary focus, not just the ‘wow factor.’ However, black and white is still our number one rental combination. It presents a timelessness that will never go away.”

Mega event planners rely on Let's Do Linens for a panoply of products and impeccable service. This year, the company provided linens for numerous spaces at the Preakness at Pimlico. The Triple Crown room was done up in black bengaline with red and lemon napkins, while many of the rooms featured Maryland commonwealth colors of yellow, red and black. Jockey Club and Sports Palace events featured a medley of navy, light pink and slate blue. Teal and black hues were used for pre-race day gathering.

Let's Do Linens sends a coordinator to important NASCAR races to ensure consistent deliveries to countless corporate tents and other venues. A truck with extra linens, which remains parked throughout each day, is replenished at night.

For alumni weekends at John Hopkins University, two fully stocked cargo trailers are on site for the convenience of planners. All the linens they require and ample extras are at their fingertips.

"Each day - every event is different and we love them all," exclaims Kilby.

Epic events can sometimes evoke monumental headaches. For want of a painstakingly prepared equipment and accessory rental plan, an exposition could fail. To best guarantee success for a large scale event, rely on the skills and experience of these and other reputable and distinguished event and party rental firms.

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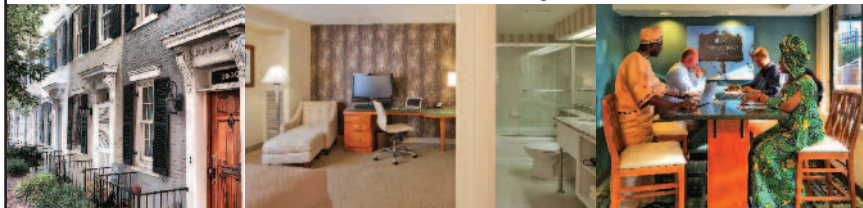
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