Ribbon Cutting Guidelines

Congratulations! You are already on the path to a successful venture. This plan will help you arrange your Grand Opening event with timelines, checklists and press release templates to promote the launch of your new business.

The following guidelines will assist you in planning a successful ribbon cutting ceremony. Five Points Alliance provides this as a complementary service in support of the local business community. Ribbon cuttings are usually planned for businesses’ expansion, relocation, grand opening, changed ownership/under new management or breaking ground.

Chamber Ribbon Cutting Kit Contents
The representation that attends your event will bring:
- Large scissors and ribbon
- PA system

Setting the Time & Date

Ribbon cuttings should be scheduled by the 20th of the month prior. Choose a date that avoids major conflict with community events or holidays. We will try our best to support your event with representation Tuesday – Thursday from 9:00am to 4:00pm. Outside these times you may be able to utilize the kit but we cannot guarantee representation. Complete the Ribbon Cutting Request Form by providing two dates and time preferences for your ribbon cutting. Once your request is received, we will coordinate with you on your date selection and pertinent details to help make your ceremony as memorable as possible.

Invitations

Although not necessary, attendance at your event might be more successful if you send out an event invitation beforehand. We will provide you with an announcement via email as well as inviting on your behalf to merchants, board and Committee members. To aide you in inviting the media and/or elected officials a sample media release form is attached. Some additional suggestions of people to consider when creating your invitation list:
- Current, past and potential customers
- Family and friends
- Suppliers
- Your employees and their guests
- Those who helped you get started: Banker, Accountant, Lawyer, Realtor, etc.
- Area business owners and managers
- Neighborhood officers and residents
Refreshments

Providing time-appropriate refreshments is very well received. For example; during a morning event it is nice to offer coffee, tea, juice, bagels or pastries. While during a lunch or evening event offering light hors d’oeuvres or finger foods is appropriate. If you chose to provide refreshment please let us know and we will promote it in our invitations.

The Ceremony

A typical ribbon cutting lasts approximately thirty minutes. Out of respect for your guests, it is important to start your ceremony on time.

The following is a typical ceremony:

- 10:00 a.m. Guests arrive
- 10:10 a.m. Brief speeches by Company Representative and Recognition of Special Guests
- 10:20 a.m. Gather group for pictures
- 10:25 a.m. Ribbon Cutting
- 10:30 a.m. Refreshments, tours, mingling/networking, etc.

Questions

We are here to help and want to see you succeed in business and become a viable asset to the Five Points business community! If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at alliance@fivepointsbham.com.
Grand Opening Event Planner

STEP ONE:
Set Your Date & Time and Invite Speakers

Date of Event:__________________________
Time of Event:__________________________
Rain Date:______________________________
Budget for my event:____________________
Master of Ceremonies:____________________
Speakers:_______________________________

My point person: ________________________
Phone #: _____________________________
Email: _________________________________

STEP TWO:
Compile Your Guest List and Arrange for Invitations

Method (mail/email):_____________________
Send by:_______________________________
RSVP Date:_____________________________
RSVP Contact:__________________________
Identify VIPs: *__________________________
Date to send reminder:____________________

STEP THREE:
Assign Your Event Tasks

Scissors & ribbon:________________________
Microphone/Podium:______________________
Caterer:_______________________________
Photographer:__________________________
Videographer:__________________________
Florist:_______________________________

STEP FOUR:
Spread the Word Pre-Event

Media
Media to Contact:________________________
Prepare Press Release:____________________
Send Press Release:_______________________
Prepare Media Alert:______________________
Send Media Alert:________________________
Post Event PR:___________________________
Send Post Event PR:_______________________
Social Media
Which and When:_________________________

STEP FIVE:
Post Event Activities

Send thank you notes:____________________
Add event information to website, newsletter and social media:
Send photos/press release to media and Economic Development:
Input all business cards into client database:
Name Tags:

NOTE: Make sure to keep the Mayors Office of Economic Development and the Birmingham Business Alliance has been notified of your opening.
REQUEST FORM

Please provide the following information so that we may arrange a Five Points Alliance ribbon cutting for your business. For more information, review the Ribbon Cutting Guidelines, available on the Five Points website: www.fivepointsbham.com

Name of Business

Address ___________________________________________ City ____________________________

Contact Names and Titles __________________________________________________________

E-mail address ___________________________________________________________________

Phone Number _____________________________ Alternate Number _______________________

Website ________________________________________________________________

1st Choice (Please review ribbon cutting guidelines before choosing a date)

Date ____________________________ Time ____________________________

2nd Choice

Date ____________________________ Time ____________________________

EVENT DETAILS TO PROMOTE – YES/NO & Details

Refreshments

Entertainment

Tours of facility

Will you be open for business during ribbon cutting ceremony?

Will someone from the company speak briefly about business?

Will any corporate VP’s be present?

Will any vendors be present?
Any Questions for Us?

_________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

By signing this request form for a ribbon cutting, I know that I will be contacted to coordinate and finalize plans.

Signature

_________________________________ Date

Thanks for being an active member of the Five Points Alliance!
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: [Name]
[E-mail address]
[Phone number]

Grand Opening & Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony to Celebrate
[Name of Business]
[Business name] has invited [name of elected official] to attend its ribbon-cutting on [date].

[CITY, STATE] – [Business name] is pleased to announce that it will hold a Grand Opening and Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony for its [newly constructed/recently renovated] XYZ facility [name of XYZ facility] onsite at [hour] on [date].

“We’re happy to introduce our latest accomplishment to the community and those who helped bring this project to fruition,” said [spokesperson’s name and title]. “The ribbon-cutting ceremony for [Business Name] marks the launch of a new era for [city name].”

[Name of elected official], [elected official's significance to the business], is scheduled to be on hand to offer a few remarks regarding [Business Name] and to assist in the ribbon-cutting.

“We’re delighted [name of elected official] has agreed to join our celebration. Our dream of [constructing/greatly improving] this facility was made possible in part by [him/her],” said [Your spokesperson’s name].

[Offer specifics on your business facility, such as how many products or selection is available; how much the capacity is; what type and how much parking is available; and other details, such as amenities it offers, final cost of the project and public funding used. If the business site has undergone renovations, include before and after facts.].

[Include details on the ribbon-cutting ceremony, such as the names and affiliations of other invited guests, what will take place at the ceremony, and other details.]

[Insert other specifics regarding your business facility, such as its significance to the community, and any interesting historical facts related to the site, or other relevant details, make sure to include your company website].

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SAMPLE POST-EVENT PRESS RELEASE
[Date]

Contact: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
[Name]
[E-mail address]
[Phone number]

[Name of Business] Celebrates Grand Opening in [City]

[Business name] held its Grand Opening on [date] and is now open for business.

[CITY, STATE] – [Business name] welcomed more than [number of attendees] at its Grand Opening and Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony held on [date]. [List of key contacts, legislators] were present to welcome [business name] to the neighborhood.

[Insert Grand Opening photo from event and add photo captions with names and titles of all included in the photo.]

“As a small business owner, it is great to see the amount of community support we had for our first day of business,” said [spokesperson’s name and title]. “The Grand Opening represents [the culmination of a lot of: hard work, strategy, etc.] and we are happy to finally welcome customers through our doors.”

[Name of Business] will be open on [days of the week] from [business hours] and is located at [street address of business].

[Offer specifics on your business facility, such as how many products or selection is available; how much the capacity is; what type and how much parking is available; and other details, such a amenities it offers, final cost of the project and public funding used. If the business site has undergone renovations, include before and after facts.].

[Insert other specifics regarding your business facility, such as its significance to the community, and any interesting historical facts related to the site, or other relevant details, make sure to include your company website].

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Grand Opening Step-by-Step Guide

STEP 1: Set Your Date and Time
• Allow plenty of time for planning, one or two months lead time is a good rule of thumb.
• Avoid major holidays. Take note of any government holidays and major sporting events.
• Check other local events by checking community calendars such as Chambers of Commerce and other business associations.
• Luncheon events are usually well attended. The best time for luncheons is between 11:30 am – 1:00 pm.
• After work events are also well attended, as they do not interfere with working hours. The best time for post-work events is between 4:30 pm – 6:30 pm.
• Avoid mid-morning and mid-afternoon times.
• Set a rain date in advance if the weather is a factor.

STEP 2: Determine Grand Opening Activities

• Traditional events include a few speeches, a ribbon cutting, and some giveaways.
• Other activity ideas include: a tour, sign unveiling, exhibits (blueprints, machinery, etc.), recognition of VIPs, music or other entertainment (radio station), a raffle or door prize (use raffle tickets to build customer database), prize displays, refreshment stations – both drink and food.
• Open House- Casual event which lists several hours. Guests come and go informally and visit your business.
• Serving food and/or beverages is almost a necessity for a successful event.
  o Morning events – coffee, juice, fruit and pastries are usually sufficient.
  o At lunchtime events, serve some kind of sandwich or buffet meal.
  o During the late afternoon or early evening events, light hors d’oeuvres or finger foods are appropriate. Chips, dips, cheeses, vegetable, fruit or cold-cut trays are ideal.
• Think out of the box, what would make your grand opening different?

STEP 3: Select Featured Speakers

• Choose a Master of Ceremonies to welcome your guests and introduce speakers. This person can also offer remarks, thanks, and recognize VIPs in attendance.
• Guest speakers: contact them within the month to give them ample time to prepare remarks, set up a time limit for each speaker. Call one week before
event to confirm attendance.

STEP 4: Finalize Grand Opening Schedule

- Compile a brief, written program for all participants with speaking roles. Be sure to provide recognition for sponsors and key people. Keep it short, one page is good.
- As a general rule, no planned program (speeches, etc.) should last more than 15 minutes with 5-10 being ideal. Plan your speakers order and time limit ahead of time. Have a set schedule. Make sure a photographer and/or videographer is scheduled.
- Sample event schedule
  1. Welcome guests
  2. Introduction to your company, your hours of operation and anything unique to your business
  3. Introduction of Board or VIPs
  4. Call up the guest speakers
  5. Cut the ribbon, usually by company head or dignitaries, or all employees, make sure to have the guests do a countdown and get the photographer(s)/media ready.
  6. Thank everyone for attending
  7. Offer attendees to join in any planned activities, tour, food, entertainment, etc.

STEP 5: Compile Invitee list

- A good guest list includes:
  o Current and past customers;
  o Potential/target customers;
  o Suppliers;
  o Family & friends;
  o Your Board of Directors or business partners;
  o Employees and spouses/significant others;
  o People that helped you start – bankers, accountants, contractors, attorneys and advisors;
  o Investors;
  o Fellow business people, neighboring businesses, business associations;
  o Key government officials – Mayors, Board of Commissioners, City Council members, legislators, and the media

- Potential/target customers include those to whom your business wants to
sell/provide a service. This type of customer should be the decision-makers who, in a family or another business, will decide to use your company’s services. Grand Openings are an opportunity to highlight what is unique about your company to this group. Sources of target names include known customers, results of internet searches, and networking efforts.

- Develop a customer database. The database should include the customer’s name, address, phone number, email address, and a column for the source of the target name “web research.” Use this database to make cold calls, mail postcards, email blasts, issue invitations, etc.

**STEP 6: Create Formal Announcement & Invitations**

- Create an announcement (letter, postcard, email message or flyer) that can be mailed, emailed, left behind for neighboring/local businesses to distribute on your behalf, or to put into gift bags.
- Personalize any letters you send with the customer’s name, if possible.
- Be sure to include your name, type of event, date, timeframe, and address. You may want to include your business card and directions (map) to the site of the event. Remember to include your logo and multiple ways for customers to reach you – office phone, number, hours, email and/or website addresses.
- Mail/email the announcement shortly before the grand opening (about 2 weeks prior). If applicable, send physical card first, then use the e-version: “Save the Date” as a reminder about 1 week later.
- Consider other methods to advertise the event: signs, websites, newsletters, Chambers of Commerce, client distribution lists, Facebook, Twitter, media event and online calendar listings, etc.

**STEP 7: Prepare for Media Coverage**

A well-prepared news release is the key to having your Grand Opening published in the local media. Be sure to include what is exciting and different about your company and a brief biographical sketch about the owner background and business specialties. (Refer to samples provided at the end of this document). Compose a Press Release:

- Keep the release brief, preferably one page. Two to three paragraphs is sufficient.
- Make sure to check the local community calendar for all local media. Send your release to: television and radio stations, newspapers, online sites, Chambers of Commerce and any community-minded companies and organizations.
The top left of your press release should include your logo, then the date. To the top right should be the phrase “FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE,” followed by the business’ contact information.

Always include the name, phone and email address of the main contact for questions from the media. Listing more than one contact is advised.

Always provide at least one photograph with every release to newspapers, even if the photo is only a head-shot of the business owners. A good photograph may increase the chances that your release will be used.

Be precise with dates and times of your event, for example: Wednesday, May 9, 2013 and 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

The release must answer the 5 W’s – who, what, when, where and why. The first four should be placed in the first or lead paragraph, the why should be explained in the second paragraph.

Do not ask for the media to hold onto a press release until a later date. Send it when you want it released.

Make sure your company contact, including the website, is at the end of the release.

Add “###” at the end, centered and double-spaced, to let the media know that is the end of the release.

STEP 8: Compose a Post-Event Press Release & Prepare Event Photos:

- A post-event press release should highlight the Grand Opening and provide a recap of the event including the number of attendees, names of legislators/dignitaries that attended and event photos.
- Photos are very important for the press release after the event. Make sure several photos are taken of the same thing, in case there is a problem with the image. Save all photos in .jpeg format, with the highest resolution.
- Zoom in tight with photos for good reproduction. Newspapers usually print in black and white.
- Make sure to write down everyone’s name and title before each photo, these will be needed to send to the media for follow-up.

STEP 9: Plan for Logistical Needs & Event Materials

- Materials needed for the Grand Opening include: all visuals, awards, checks, documents, gifts, product samples, gift certificates, etc.
- Signage/windows – be sure windows and doors are marked with your logo and hour of operation.
- If you have speakers, you many need a podium, microphone and chairs. Ensure your company logo is displayed prominently. Chairs, tables and linens may also
have to be rented.

- Large scissors and ribbon can be provided by your Carroll County Chamber of Commerce or Carroll County Economic Development for the ribbon cutting.
- Carroll County Economic Development has a large “Grand Opening” banner that can be borrowed.
- If the event includes a groundbreaking, a shovel is necessary.
- Think about adverse weather conditions - if hot weather is forecasted, you may want a tent or plan to move the event indoors.
- Directional assistance: use road marker signs with arrows or balloons to guide guests to your location.
- Decorations: flowers, Grand Opening signs, balloons, large display flag, etc.
- Registration: name tags, guest book to collect email address and fishbowl for business cards (great for future customer list). Be sure to have any materials on display to promote your business such as brochures, flyers or other take-a-ways.
- Food and beverages for number of attendees. Plan for enough linens, garbage bags and trash cans (make sure to place trash cans in strategic location).
- Plan ahead for any A/V equipment needs and plan in advance to make sure all equipment functions properly. Schedule a run-through and set-up early in the day to ensure functionality.