



# Guide to Planning Your Ribbon Cutting or Groundbreaking

## Criteria for your ribbon cutting or groundbreaking

- Must be a current member of the Wausau Region Chamber of Commerce in good standing.
- Your ribbon cutting or ground breaking must fall into one of the following categories:
  - New Business/Organization
  - Established Business/Organization – New Location
  - Established Business/Organization – New Owners
  - Established Business/Organization – Completed Major Expansion/Renovation
  - Significant Company Re-branding/Name Change
- Your event must take place during Chamber business hours.

### Note:

- *If you are celebrating an anniversary please contact the Chamber at 715-845-6231 for information.*
- *Rental scissors and ribbon are available, for a fee of \$50, if your ribbon cutting does not meet the criteria of the Chamber and you would like to plan your own event.*

## Selecting a date and time for your event

Selecting a date is one of the most important decisions you will make as you begin the process of planning and staging a successful event. Before you make your decision, here are some important things to consider:

- Allow plenty of time for preparation. If possible, give yourself at least 2-3 weeks to make your arrangements.
- Be aware of major holidays and avoid planning your event for those days. Also, if you are trying to attract bankers or government representatives, take note of any special holidays when their offices may be closed.
- Please contact the Wausau Region Chamber of Commerce well in advance to avoid date and time conflicts with our events and programs. Also, this allows us time to add your event to our program calendar and notify possible attendees. We may be able to respond on short notice, but prefer at least a two week notice. We will also need other specifics of your event, such as time, location, type of event, etc.
- The best days of the week to get good attendance are Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays. Mondays tend to be too busy for people to leave the office and many people take Fridays off to start their weekends early. Because our Ambassadors are volunteers, we do not allow groundbreakings and ribbon cuttings during the weekends.
- Unless it is a necessity, morning events should begin no earlier than 8 am.
- Luncheon events often turn out well since most everyone eats a mid-day meal. However, luncheons require more advance notice. Many people schedule lunch arrangements weeks ahead and they will need to be notified as early as possible to get your event on their calendars. If you decide on a lunch event, the best time is 11:45 am to 1 pm
- Late afternoon and early evening events seems to be the most popular and successful. This allows people to drop by after work at their convenience and doesn't interfere with their busy workday. The best time for an evening event is 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

- Try to avoid mid-morning and mid-afternoon time periods. Many people are reluctant or unable to break away from their work in the middle of the day.
- Half-day open houses or tours of your company are not advisable unless it's necessary or traditional in your line of business. If you decide on a half-day event, be certain to have a designated time for a ribbon cutting or other special ceremonies to lend focus to your event.

## Contact the Chamber

Once you have established the reason for your event and possible dates, contact the Chamber at 715-845-6231 or [info@wausauchamber.com](mailto:info@wausauchamber.com). Chamber staff will finalize the details, add your event to the Chamber online calendar, and send invitations to the Chamber Ambassadors and Staff.

## Publicizing your ribbon cutting or groundbreaking

- The Chamber will send a press release to local media prior to your event. Please send your event details to Brian Otten at [botten@wausauchamber.com](mailto:botten@wausauchamber.com).
- Send invitations to those whom you would like to attend outside of Chamber Ambassadors and Staff. Inviting the “right” people will vary depending on the event and your business, but they would normally include the following:
  - Potential and current customers (your most important group)
  - Suppliers
  - Friends and family—this is a big day for you and you’ll want to share it with them
  - Your Board of Directors (if applicable)
  - Your employees and their spouses
  - Those who have helped you get started (banker, contractor, accountant, attorney, advisor)
  - Fellow business people in your area
  - Key government officials (mayor, city council members)
  - The media

### Once you’ve identified your guest list, remember when inviting them:

- Prepare a nice letter or very basic invitation, but always keep it simple and to the point. Make sure all basic information is included (who, what, when, where and why).
- Asking for RSVP’s does help you with deciding how much food to provide, but if you ask for RSVP’s, please know that people will typically wait until the last minute or show up without RSVP-ing.
- Allow sufficient notice—between 10 days to two weeks is ideal for most events, although two weeks would be preferable.
- Be sure to include a map or clear instructions on how to get to your event. A street address alone sometimes may not be sufficient.
- Will parking be an issue? If so, please use the invitation to indicate and let the Chamber know where you would like guests to park.
- If you choose to do an elaborate invitation, get professional help from a graphic artist or designer.
- Send your invitation by first-class mail, if at all possible. Bulk mail can take a week or longer.

## Planning for the day of your event

**Serving food and beverage** — although it is an added expense that you may prefer to avoid, serving food and beverage of some kind is almost a necessity for a successful event.

- For morning events, coffee, juices, fruit and pastries are usually sufficient. A full breakfast is not necessary.
- At lunchtime events, serve some kind of sandwich or buffet meal. Remember, it's your guest's lunchtime and they will expect some kind of filling food.
- During the late afternoon or early evening events, light hors d'oeuvres or finger foods are appropriate. Chips, dips, cheeses, vegetables or cold-cut trays are ideal.
- For medium or large events, enlisting the help of a professional caterer saves time and manpower and lends more expertise to the preparation. Caterers can give you good, solid advice and are not as costly as you might fear. A list of Chamber member catering businesses can be found at [www.wausauchamber.com](http://www.wausauchamber.com).
- If you decide to provide your own refreshments, be sure to have an adequate amount of food and beverage for your guests, as well as ample plates, cups, napkins, trash receptacles and other supplies.

**Planning a program/mapping out your agenda** — it adds a nice touch to have a brief program for your event. It provides valuable recognition for you and your key people, allows you to explain more about your business and makes the event more purposeful.

- The shorter, the better. As a rule, no program or official ceremony should last longer than 20 to 30 minutes, with 5–10 minutes being ideal.
- Prepare an agenda, even if it's just a back-of-an-envelope kind of thing. Things run much more smoothly. We suggest your agenda could be something like this:
  - Welcome guests—done by owner, manager, president, etc.
  - Introduction of company—explain what you do if it is a new business, about your location—if a second location or a move, your hours and introduce staff.
  - Introduction of Board members, elected officials and other dignitaries.
  - Call up those who are speaking (if this is part of your program).
  - Cut the ribbon—usually done by dignitaries and head of company representatives. Some choose to have all employees involved.
  - Thank you for attending—by a company representative.
  - Offer everyone to take a look at your facility, and if large enough, you may want to offer tours.
  - Limit the number of speakers and the length of their speeches. Set a time limit for all who take part in the program.

- Introduce only those who need to be introduced, even though the temptation will be to acknowledge nearly everyone in attendance that you know.
- Conclude your program with the appropriate ceremonial or symbolic activity. A ribbon cutting for a grand opening is a good way to let guests know the formal program is over and creates good publicity opportunities for your photography.
- If your event includes an open house or tour of your facilities, be sure friendly and knowledgeable employees conduct group tours. Unguided self-tours are not nearly as valuable.
- Consider having some kind of door prize or drawing. Winning a sample of your product, dinner for two, etc., can add to your guest's enjoyment and build attendance.

**Obtain ribbon that suits your needs if planning a ribbon cutting**—The Wausau Region Chamber of Commerce will provide the red ribbon for ribbon cuttings. If you are interested in obtaining your own ribbon, containing your company colors or a bow professionally tied in the middle, contact a Chamber member florist. A list of Chamber member florists can be found at [www.wausauchamber.com](http://www.wausauchamber.com).

**Media coverage** — you should not rely on the media to give extensive coverage to your special event. It's not that they do not view your function as significant, it's simply a matter of lack of staffing and sufficient air time or print space to carry your story.

- Send your invitation to the news directors or city editors at least 10 days ahead of your event. Include a brief letter or news release that contains the journalistic basics of who, what, when, where and why. A list of Chamber member media can be found at [www.wausauchamber.com](http://www.wausauchamber.com). Also share these items with the Chamber Marketing Manager as pre- and post-event press releases will be sent to the Chamber media list. Marketing Manager Brian Otten can be reached at [botten@wausauchamber.com](mailto:botten@wausauchamber.com) or 715-848-5947.
- The Chamber will post details, video and photos from your ribbon cutting on Chamber social media channels before, during and after your event. If you have social media accounts for your business, these items will also be shared to your accounts and tagged to optimize their impact.

**Locate a company sign or banner if needed.**

**Pre-determine room layout (where to place tables, chairs, podium, etc).**

**Prepare any materials needed for this event, such as visuals, awards, checks, documents, gifts, samples, etc).**

**Schedule a photographer if you desire professional photos. A list of Chamber member photographers can be found at [www.wausauchamber.com](http://www.wausauchamber.com).**