



ORGANISING A CATWALK SHOW

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If you have the budget, getting in the professionals to create your catwalk show is the best way to guarantee success. Respected industry professionals such as Lesley Goring, the duo Martyn Roberts and John Walford of Vauxhall Fashion Scout and Lee Lapthorne at On:Off, have all been in show production for many years and have a wealth of knowledge and experience in the field. If you have the means to hand your show project over to a professional you can sit back and relax. However, if money is too tight for this to be a viable option read on.

ARTS THREAD offers 12 essential tips to navigate your way through this complex, challenging but exciting process.

1. PLANNING IS ALL! You need to start well in advance of the event and **draw up a timescale or 'critical path'**. Start at the preferred date of the event and work backwards. You will need a couple of people to form a team and share the workload, but it's crucial to **appoint a project manager** to oversee the whole thing and delegate tasks. Put in key deadlines on the calendar and ensure you (and others in the team) stick to them.

2. BUDGET Cash may be tight, but you can get a lot out of limited funds with lots of imagination and a clear plan. Draw up a clear budget: make an **estimate of how much you think everything is going to cost**. You will need some 'costing estimates' from outside agencies such as printers, model agencies etc—so enough time needs to be allocated for this. They will often ask what your budget is before they start—in order to give you options—but everything comes back to cost. **Thorough research and good negotiation skills will be crucial** here. Once you have your estimated costs—you may realise you need

to do some fundraising! Consider getting a local company you know to support your show and maybe help out with funding—or contributing practical help instead? For example, you may be able to get local shoe stores to sponsor the footwear for the show.

3. THE VENUE You need to secure a space to put on your show. **Apart from the cost, consider the following things carefully before you decide.**

Availability—is it free for the date you require? Many popular venues are booked up many months in advance.

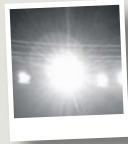
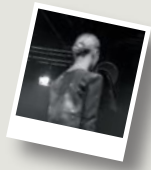
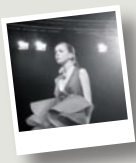
Legality—what are the restrictions on holding a performance there—do you need a licence? Music and refreshments need to be a consideration—you will need to check out the legalities of using certain music in a public performance and what you can serve/sell to your guests at the event.

Capacity—how many people will the venue hold? Health and Safety regulations will specify this and there are other things in terms of holding a public performance that you must adhere to. The capacity is key to the atmosphere of the event; for example, if the venue is too big and there aren't enough people to fill it, then the atmosphere will feel empty and a bit sad.

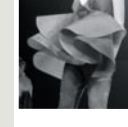
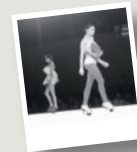
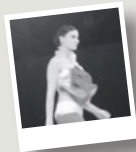
Staging, lighting etc—what is available at the venue? If this is limited—**what will you need to provide** in terms of both equipment and manpower?

Accessibility—is it easy to find by public transport, accessible to people with disabilities etc.

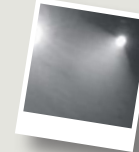
4. THEME/IDENTITY Consider creating a theme or 'identity' for your event. This is a good idea to ensure that all the elements of the show 'hang together' in a professional, satisfying way. Arrange a meeting to discuss ideas—its good to get as much input as



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possible on this before deciding. Once this has been decided then it's a great idea to get a graphic designer to devise some graphics that fit your theme. (This could be great work experience for a student—or you could enlist an amateur artist). This 'identity' can then be used on all promotional material such as the invitation, the programme and running order etc.

5. INVITATIONS Something that often gets left too late! Allocate one person to co-ordinate this. Create an exciting invitation that will stand out and capture attention. Draw up a guest list and invite local press and local business people to your show. **Ensure the invitations are sent out in plenty of time** so that people can put the date in their diaries. Get volunteers on board to help with posting/delivering etc.

6. PROGRAMME AND RUNNING ORDER If you are really well organised you might be able to create these as part of one publication, but it is more usual to have these as separate documents. These can be as simple or as glossy as you like depending on how much time, money and effort you spend on them.

The **show programme** should contain information about the show, thanks to sponsors, contact information for the school/college. Contact information for individual student designers can also be included, and this is a good idea, as shows are generally at the end of a course of study when students are moving on to somewhere else.

The programme can also contain

advertising from local businesses (which may ensure that it pays for itself). **Running orders** are a sheet that explains the order in which the actual outfits appear on the stage at the show. These are crucial to the audience making sense of (and journalists making notes on) the show, but due to last minute changes or fine-tuning (usually at rehearsals), these are often kept separate from the programme.

7. MODELS Use a local professional agency if at all possible; you can usually choose the look of the models through auditions/castings to create the look for the show that you want. The agency may well have experience of organising actual catwalk shows—so consider commissioning them to organise this as an option if you have the funds. If not then you will have to work out a running order and ensure that you have enough models to enable one set of people to change outfits backstage while others come on to take their place in the performance.

Educational fashion charity FAD have staged many successful catwalk shows, and Reyes Lora, Director of Educational Projects, has this advice, "Treat models well, make sure they have refreshments and food if necessary. Happy models make a big difference to the show! Try and give the a little bit of privacy if possible, separating the changing area from hair and make-up, they do appreciate it. And when garment fitting on the models she says, "Once you decide who is wearing what, it's useful to take a Polaroid photo and stick it on the wall, so the person

dressing that model has a checklist to refer to."

If you want to use student models—it will be cheaper, but you will have to consider building in extra time and resources for more rehearsals etc to ensure that that student models can pull off a professional looking show.

8. HAIR AND MAKE-UP It's essential to get someone to take charge of this, create a look for the models and decide on make-up and hair etc well in advance of the event. Enquire if a local hairdressing salon will lend their services for free promotion and advertising in your programme.

9. MUSIC You will need a soundtrack to accompany the show. Playing any music at a public event involves obtaining a licence and often royalty payments—so do some research. You may have to use your imagination and get creative here—so if your college/school has a music dept, enlisting their help may be an option.

10. LIGHTING/STAGING/GRAPHICS Consult the experts wherever possible, as this is an area where you really need expertise to create a professional result. Again, someone allocated to stage manage the actual show, co-ordinate models, dressers and create a smooth event is essential. Consider getting someone to create a slide show of projected graphics to fill in any gaps and to flash up information—names of the participants/sponsors etc. Again, this will need planning and preparation and you will need to

rehearse how this works with the main part of the show.

11. BACKSTAGE All important to producing a show you can be proud of. You will need 'dressers' backstage to assist the models and the quick changes that they will be making during the course of the show. **These people should be organised and reliable.** They will need a **backstage running order**—a detailed list on which you have decided exactly what garment goes with what accessories etc for all of the individual models. Usually one dresser is allocated to one or two models and any problems are ironed out at the rehearsals/run-through.

12. POSTERS AND PROMOTION Now that you have put in so much effort and hard work into creating your show—**ensure you build in time to promote and tell people about it!** Enticing and lively posters and flyers distributed to key locations, a notice in the local press etc are all good ways of letting the right people know about your event.

At the show itself, you might consider a 'goodie bag' for front row guests. This could contain some small promotional gifts from sponsors, a complimentary drink and some further information about the school/college courses or other events. Be as imaginative as possible—small treats for guests all contribute to the overall experience of the event.

Finally, Reyes advises not to forget a welcoming and helpful 'front of house' team. Good luck with your show!