

How a Corporate Events Business Went From \$84K to \$252K in Net Profit in Four Months

The Situation

A corporate events business came to us generating \$700,000 in annual revenue. On paper the business looked healthy. A steady roster of repeat corporate clients, a reputation built on flawless execution, a small team that knew what they were doing.

But the owner was done. Not burnt out in a dramatic way. Just quietly exhausted in the way that happens when you have been delivering at a high level for years and the bank account does not reflect it.

Gross margin was 38%. Net profit was 12%, \$84,000 on \$700,000 in revenue. For a business that consumed every hour the owner had, that was not a number worth sustaining. The financials had been looked at enough times to know something was wrong. The problem was that running the next event always took priority over figuring out exactly where.

The first thing we said was that revenue was not the problem. That was hard to hear, because winning more clients felt like the only lever available. But adding volume to a business that is not capturing its full margin on existing work just scales the problem.

We installed six systems over four months. It was not a straight line.

System 1: Profit Recovery

We start every engagement by looking for profit that is already inside the business but leaking out. In corporate events, that leakage is structural and largely invisible to owners who are focused on delivery.

Project costing was the first place we looked. Events were being priced on experience and gut feel rather than true cost build-ups. Supplier costs, staff hours, logistics, equipment, contingency. When we mapped actual project costs against what had been quoted, the margins on certain event types were almost nothing once everything was in the picture. The owner knew some jobs felt thin. The owner did not know how thin.

Scope creep was the bigger issue. Corporate clients routinely add requirements after a brief is signed. Additional AV, last minute catering changes, extended setup times, post-event content requests. Almost none of it was being billed. It was being absorbed in the name of client relationships and repeat business. The instinct was understandable. The financial impact was significant.

A formal change order process was implemented. Every out of scope request documented, priced, and approved before execution. Clients did not push back. They had been operating in an environment where changes were free. Once a process existed they accepted it immediately because it was professional, not because they were forced to.

Supplier invoices were audited against project budgets for the prior 12 months. Overruns that had been absorbed rather than recovered were quantified. Vendor terms on the top five supplier relationships were renegotiated based on volume commitment.

Combined, the profit recovery work added \$50,000 in annualized profit before a single thing changed on the revenue side.

System 2: Market Dominance

Corporate events is a crowded market. Most operators compete on relationships, responsiveness, and some version of seamless execution. Clients shop around. Decisions come down to price and whoever they spoke to last. In a market like this, you do not build a business. You rent one, one client at a time, and hope the phone keeps ringing.

We repositioned around two sectors: technology companies and financial services firms. Not because the other work was bad, but because these two sectors run the highest volume of events, have the largest budgets, operate on annual planning cycles, and make decisions through procurement and EA channels that reward specialist knowledge over generalist availability.

The owner was resistant at first. The fear was losing work from clients outside those sectors. It is a common fear and it is almost always wrong.

Being a specialist in tech and financial services events means understanding the specific compliance requirements around financial services hospitality, the technical demands of product launch productions, the procurement processes of enterprise technology companies, and the internal politics of getting an offsite approved by a CFO. Generalists cannot speak that language fluently. Specialists can.

Within six weeks the conversation in new business meetings changed. Procurement contacts at two enterprise technology firms who had been using a larger national operator started conversations about a trial brief. The positioning shift had made the business distinct in a way it had not been before.

System 3: Pricing Power

Pricing had been set the way most events businesses set pricing. Look at what the market charges. Build in what feels like a reasonable margin. Hope the project comes in on budget.

We rebuilt the pricing model from scratch.

First we established true project costs across every event type in the portfolio. Staff hours at fully loaded rates, supplier costs with no optimism bias, logistics, contingency, and a realistic allocation of owner and management time. When the numbers were laid out properly the owner was quiet for a moment. Several event types that felt profitable were not, once the real costs were visible.

The sector specialization created something that had not previously existed: a legitimate basis for premium pricing. Tech and financial services clients are not primarily price sensitive. They are risk sensitive. A supplier who understands their world, their compliance environment, and their internal approval processes commands a premium because the alternative, a cheaper generalist who gets something wrong in front of a CFO, is far more expensive than the price difference.

A tiered project model was built. Standard corporate events for non-specialist clients, specialist sector delivery for tech and financial services, and a premium managed program tier for clients running four or more events per year that included dedicated planning support, preferred supplier access, and proactive calendar management.

A change order protocol was already in place from the profit recovery work. The pricing rebuild formalized it further. Base rates moved up. Not aggressively. Enough to reflect the value being delivered.

One long-standing client pushed back on the new rates. After a direct conversation about the value of the relationship and what the specialist positioning meant for their events program, they stayed. The revenue impact of the repricing added \$37,000 to annualized net profit.

System 4: Customer Value Optimization

Winning a corporate events client is expensive and slow. Procurement processes, reference checks, trial briefs, internal approvals. Most events businesses do all of that work and then manage the relationship reactively until the next brief lands.

Most of the value in a corporate client relationship is never captured.

We put three mechanisms in place.

The annual event calendar review. Every active client above a threshold spend was offered a structured planning session at the start of their fiscal year. The session mapped their confirmed events, likely events, and aspirational events for the next 12 months. It surfaced budget, timing, and internal ownership for each. Clients found it genuinely useful. It also meant the business had forward visibility on revenue and could plan resourcing accordingly. Three clients who had been using the business for single events committed to program-level relationships as a result.

A production and content upsell program. Corporate events increasingly require post-event content. Highlight reels, photography, social assets, internal communications material. The business had been referring this work to third parties informally. We formalized a curated

supplier network and built content capture into every proposal as a standard line item with a clear price. Attachment rate in the first 60 days was over 50%.

A client health protocol. Key contacts at corporate clients change. Procurement leads move on. Internal champions get restructured out. The business had lost two clients in the prior 18 months not because of poor delivery but because the relationship had sat with one contact who left. A quarterly check-in process was implemented for every active client, mapped to the right level of seniority, with a structured agenda that kept the relationship broad rather than dependent on a single point of contact.

Average client value increased by over 20%. Combined with longer program relationships and the content upsell, lifetime client value moved significantly. The economics of every new client won going forward changed as a result.

System 5: Strategic Partnerships

The business had supplier relationships. Good ones in some cases. But they were transactional. Volume went to preferred venues and AV suppliers. Nothing formal came back the other way.

It was not a partnership program. It was a purchasing pattern.

We built a three-tier referral and partnership structure.

Venues. The top six venue relationships were formalized into preferred partner agreements. In exchange for volume commitment and early access to availability, each venue agreed to a structured referral protocol for inquiries they could not accommodate directly. Venues receive inquiries they cannot fulfill every week. Most refer informally or not at all. A formal agreement with a named contact and a follow-up process changed that. New client introductions from venue partners added meaningfully to pipeline within the first 90 days.

Complementary suppliers. AV production companies, photographers, catering operators, and event technology providers all work with the same corporate client base. Formal mutual referral agreements were put in place with the top operator in each category. Co-referral tracking was implemented so the flow of introductions was visible and reciprocal.

Corporate adjacents. Executive assistants and office managers at mid to large corporates are the gatekeepers for event briefs. A structured EA network program was built, a quarterly briefing on event planning for corporates, positioned as a useful resource rather than a sales tool. Attendance built a direct relationship with the decision influencers before a brief was ever issued.

Referral volume from structured partnerships increased 40% over the first 90 days compared to the prior period. That was not from working harder on relationships. It was from working them differently.

System 6: Systemization

None of the above is sustainable if the owner remains the critical path on every project.

When we started, the owner was the lead on every major account, the person who signed off on every supplier quote, the one who handled anything that went wrong on the day. Which in events is always something.

We documented every core process. Client brief intake, project scoping and costing, supplier briefing and management, on-site execution protocols, post-event reconciliation, client reporting. Each process assigned to a role with clear accountability and a defined output. A project management framework was implemented that gave every team member visibility of every active project without the owner needing to be the information hub.

The owner pushed back on the documentation work. It felt slow when there were events to run. We pushed back harder. The documentation was what made everything else permanent. Without it the systems would revert to depending on one person.

A simple operating dashboard was built. Eight numbers. Revenue in pipeline, confirmed revenue, gross margin per project type, average project value, client retention rate, referral volume, outstanding receivables, owner hours per project. Visible weekly without anyone having to compile it.

Ten weeks into systemization the owner was present on major accounts but no longer running them. Project managers were handling execution. The owner used the recovered time to focus on the sector specialist positioning and the EA network program that was driving the highest quality new business.

The Result

Four months in, annualized revenue had moved from \$700,000 to approximately \$980,000. Driven by the pricing restructure, the formalized client program relationships, the content upsell attachment rate, and the 40% lift in referral volume from the partnership program.

Net profit moved from \$84,000 to \$252,000. Net margin moved from 12% to 26%. That improvement did not apply only to the new revenue. The pricing discipline, the change order process, and the supplier renegotiations from the profit recovery work changed the margin profile across the entire existing revenue base. Every project that had been running thin got repriced or restructured. The margin improvement compounded across both old and new volume simultaneously.

What changed in four months was not the market, the competition, or the economy. New clients came in through the partnership program and the sector repositioning. Existing clients spent more and stayed longer. What made both of those things possible was that for the first time the business had systems behind it instead of a person holding it all together.

The Numbers at a Glance

	Before	After
Annual Revenue	\$700,000	\$980,000
Net Profit	\$84,000	\$252,000
Net Margin	12%	26%
Avg. Project Value	Baseline	+20%
Referral Volume	Baseline	+40%
Program Clients	0	3
Owner Hours Per Project	Full owner involvement on every project	Project managers handling execution
Timeline		4 months

Is This Relevant to Your Business?

The owner came to us quietly exhausted. Not burnt out in a dramatic way. Just worn down by the gap between the quality of work going out the door and what the business was actually returning.

Four months later the gap was closed. Not because the market changed, or because the owner won more clients, or because the owner worked harder. Because for the first time the business had systems behind it instead of a person holding it all together.

The owner still runs the business. Just not from inside it anymore.

The systems installed here are not events specific. They are profit and revenue systems that work in any service business that is running well on delivery but not on margin.

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