



**FARMINGTON**  
chamber of commerce

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# **RIBBON CUTTING PLANNER**

# HISTORY

## HOW RIBBON CUTTINGS BECAME AN EVENT

Ribbon Cutting Ceremonies first started with the inauguration of the initiative for the Louisiana Railroad in the late 19th century, but it was nowhere to what we have today. After more research, I learned that it began with the christenings of docks and boats around the late 19th century in the United Kingdom. Christening ceremonies, I remember well, as I was privileged to take part in one each time we got a new boat. We would typically invite our immediate family and some friends to join us as champagne was poured into glasses, and before the toast, another bottle from the same batch was smashed over our boat. Then a typical toast was made: "I thank our family and friends for joining us to welcome a new member into our family. Next, we named the boat and said, "I name this boat (say the name) on this (Say day, date, year) and wish all here happy, healthy, abundant times on the shore and abroad our new boat."

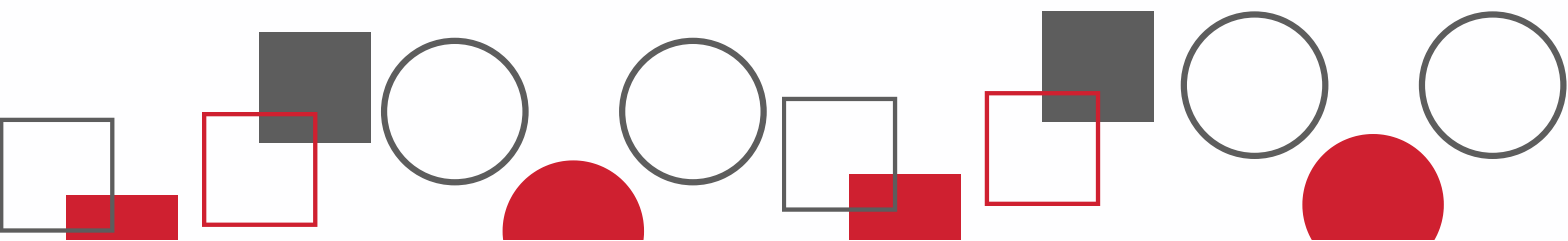
Another game changer for ribbon-cutting ceremonies involved Alexandra of Denmark, then known as Princess of Wales, when she was part of the opening of the Alexandra Dock in Liverpool in 1881, according to the New York Post. During this ceremony, the chairman of the Dock Board, Mr. T.D. Hornby presented to Princess a parasol of which the handle was decorated in fine, richly studded gold jewels that screwed off to reveal a sharp blade. A ribbon was draped from one side of the dock to the other, and your Highness severed it with the blade. Following the ribbon cutting, a weight was dropped to shatter the bottle of wine into pieces as Princess said, "I name this dock the Alexandra Dock."



Later on, it became customary to celebrate the openings of new bridges, homes, commercial buildings, parks, etc. Often prominent people were asked to cut the ribbon, and the experience of slicing ribbons did not exist before the late 19th century and was not widespread until the 1950s and 1960s.

## THE MEANING BEHIND THE RIBBON AND THE SCISSORS

The elaborate ceremonial scissors and the cutting of an extra-wide ribbon symbolize the opening of something new. Similar to unwrapping a wrapped gift. The ceremony becomes a moment for the community to rally behind your business and anticipate the promise of something new and exciting.





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# DATE & TIME

- Give yourself a 4-8 weeks to plan the ceremony and to get on the calendars of the people you want to attend.
- If your new space is still being finished, wait until you're certain when the new space really will be finished before you plan your ribbon cutting. Don't take the contractor's word for it. Many things are out of his control, including when his vendors will actually deliver.
- Check with your Chamber of Commerce and with any officials you want to attend before finalizing the date. Having them in attendance makes your business and your news look more important. Make sure there's nothing else going on that day in the town, because that could pull attendees away from your event or it could take up all the parking spaces so people can't get to your event.

# WEEKEND, WEEKDAY OR DUAL CEREMONY

The key to a successful Ribbon Cutting is choosing a day in which Representatives, Chamber members, and business peers may easily attend.

A good day of the week is one in which there are no City meetings taking place.

Another option is to host two ribbon cutting ceremonies: first, a chamber-led ribbon-cutting ceremony during the week; and then, host a grand opening celebration with potential clients as the main focus during the weekend.

A successful turnout for a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony creates a lot of positive press, a win-win for everyone!

- Consider when the people you want to attend the ceremony are going to be free.
- Check if there is going to be an important event in the community on the date of your choice, so you can choose a time that doesn't clash with said event.
- Another tip is to check what the weather forecast for that day is since most ribbon cutting ceremonies are held outdoors. And even if they are indoors, inclement weather conditions may dwindle the number of people that attend your event.

# SPREAD THE WORD

Make a list of everyone you would like to attend.

Call the local media with your information, and ask them to cover your ceremony. Follow up with emails reiterating the information.

Post the event on social media, and, as the event draws closer, keep updating the page. Change your posts to make them interesting and to keep people coming back. Announce your social media presence in your company newsletter and emails.

- **Facebook**
- **Twitter**
- **Instagram**
- **LinkedIn**
- **Blog**

For your invitations and flyers, you'll need the following information:

- WHO: Your company name
- WHAT/WHY: Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for our \_\_\_\_ (new building, new location, etc.)
- WHEN: Day of the week, date and time (i.e. Thursday, July 19, 20\_\_)
- WHERE: Address for the event
- R.S.V.P. : Phone number (and name if needed i.e. "Call Marion at (xxx) xxx-xxxx ext. X")
- Refreshments will be served

People who are on the fence about coming or who have multiple invitations for the same time, will often come to yours – if you're serving food. If you're having the event catered, note on the invitation something which indicates that food better than potato chips and punch will be served. For example, you can write: "Assorted appetizers from Le Chef will be served."



# PLAN THE CEREMONY

1. Provide Enough Notice
2. Be sure to clarify any special instructions such as the best place to park.
3. Plan a Time for Brief Remarks: At the event, once enough people have gathered, say a few brief remarks – welcoming your guests/dignitaries, updating them on your business and telling them how they can best stay on top of your upcoming news and happenings. Keep all remarks brief!
4. Consider Hiring a Photographer: Hire a professional photographer to help capture memories of this special moment. Ensure they take high-res photos of your remarks, the ribbon cutting ceremony, photos of your space, products/services, guests mingling, etc. These photos are great for sharing on your website, social media channels, newsletters and with media.
5. Serve Refreshments: Be sure to have some food and beverages on hand for everyone to enjoy afterwards while they mingle/network and provide tours of your space if it makes sense. You can have something casual and inexpensive like a table with small platters and drinks, or more elegant with a full-service bar and passed hors d'oeuvres.
6. Spread The News: The following morning, distribute a brief recap of your event (along with a few key photos) to media who might be interested in sharing your great news with the community. Ask your business partners to help share the news too on their websites, social media pages, newsletters, etc.
7. Hire Help If Needed: If you feel overwhelmed about planning and maximizing your grand opening or ribbon cutting ceremony.

## CREATE A CHECKLIST

- Speakers - Who will talk about your news, give a brief synopsis and thanks? Maximum of 2 speakers, 2-3 minutes each
- Ribbon Cutter/Holders - Should be owners, partner, etc., flanked by chamber of commerce dignitary and other VIPs, perhaps family
- Entertainment/Demo/Guides - Music, magician, demo of a new product? People stationed in each room to explain what's new?
- Have your scheduled speakers deliver their speeches before the ribbon cutting, as the crowd usually dissolves right after. Planning details in advance also reduces confusion at the event. Plan to keep the entire event to between one and two hours long.
- Send reminder emails one week before the ceremony. Then, the day before, contact the chamber and the local media to make sure someone will attend.

# RIBBON CUTTING CHECKLIST

- ☐ Design Invitations
- ☐ Prepare your guest list. Create both an A list and B list. The A list are guests that you have a personal relationship with. These A list persons should be personally contacted by the owner.
  - ☐ business partners
  - ☐ friends and family
  - ☐ financiers/bankers
  - ☐ contractors
  - ☐ employees and their families
  - ☐ customers
  - ☐ neighboring businesses
  - ☐ elected officials/council members/mayor ([click here for list](#))
  - ☐ neighbors
  - ☐ landlord and building tenants
  - ☐ Facebook, LinkedIn and other social media contacts
  - ☐ Contacts in your phone, Outlook, etc.
- ☐ Decide on your communications strategy
  - ☐ Advertising
  - ☐ Flyer distribution/invitations
  - ☐ Social media
  - ☐ Email, digital marketing, etc.

# CHECKLIST CONTINUED

- ☐ Press releases
  - ☐ Agenda or Program. Typically, 20-30 minutes long, include speaker order
  - ☐ Emcee or Guest Speakers
  - ☐ Additional activities (tours, exhibits, posters, activities, games for children, etc.)
  - ☐ Press Releases
  - ☐ Caterer
  - ☐ Photography
  - ☐ Set Up
  - ☐ Giveaways/Door Prizes
  - ☐ Parking Assistance
  - ☐ Greeters
  - ☐ VIP Coordinator
  - ☐ Tour Guides / Exhibits / Activities
  - ☐ Music
  - ☐ Microphone / PA System
  - ☐ Thanking Departing Guest
  - ☐ Ribbon and Scissors
  - ☐ Clean-Up
  - ☐ Sending thank-you notes
  - ☐ Post photos and video and information on your website, newsletter, facebook, etc.
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# PRESS RELEASE SAMPLE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Company Name]

[Date]

[Headline]

[Sub-header: write one sentence about why this news is important.]

[Place, date]. [Business Name] will be opening its doors for the first time on [date]. The public is invited to celebrate the occasion and to experience the [standout qualities of the business] firsthand. The event will start at [time] at [location].

The grand opening includes [special offers] and there will be [detailed list of attractions].

“[Quote from the owner of the business about the business],” said [quoted source]. “[Quote continued].”

[Business name] is a [describe business, mission statement, etc.]

“[Quote from the CEO/President/Vice President about the community in which new business is located],” said [quoted source]. “[Finish off the quote with a word on how exciting it is to be opening].”

About [Business Name]

[Two to three sentences on what the business does.

Include significant business partners and mission statement].

Media Contact:

[Name]

[Job Title]

[Email address]

[Phone number]

[Website]

