

CHANTICO EVENTS

MELBOURNE · EVENT STYLING STUDIO

A FREE GUIDE

The Brand-Led Activation Guide

*How to brief a stylist who
actually reads the brief.*

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Why I wrote this short guide.

If you're a marketing lead, brand team or event manager planning a corporate activation in Melbourne, this guide is for you.

I'm Hayley. I run Chantico Events, a Melbourne styling studio. Most of the corporate work I take on comes through event management companies and brand teams who want a stylist who'll read the brief, listen to the brand, and deliver something forward-thinking and on-trend.

I wrote this short guide because I see the same friction over and over. Marketing teams brief stylists who don't really listen. Event managers get handed a hire catalogue when they wanted a brand-led concept. Brands pay premium prices for activations that look like every other one at the same venue.

Here's how to think about a brand-led activation, and how to brief one yourself, whether you end up working with Chantico or not.

— Hayley



Hayley Aceski, on-site for a Melbourne build day.

Four Signals To Look For In Brand-Led Styling.

Whether you're hiring a stylist or reviewing a concept your event manager has handed you, here are four signals that separate brand-led styling from a recycled hire pack. If the concept misses any of them, send it back to the mood board.

Forward-thinking. Look for styling that feels like the next thing, not the last thing. If the florals, lighting and stage concept could have run last quarter at the same venue with another brand, push back. Your activation should look ahead, not behind.

Thoughtful on every surface. The entrance. The stage. The lounge. The bar. The signage. The photo corner. Every one of those touchpoints is part of the brand experience, and every one of them deserves the same level of care as the hero moment. Ask your stylist where the thinking went on the smaller surfaces.

Functional, not just pretty. This is the one most concepts get wrong. A stage looks beautiful in a render but the seating doesn't work. A lounge photographs well but no one can actually network in it. Brand-led styling has to function under crowd, camera and run sheet — not just sit pretty in a render.

On-trend. Trends shift fast in event design. Texture, palette, florals, lighting, signage style. A stylist who's not paying attention to where the industry is moving will style your activation in last year's language. If a concept feels familiar, ask why.

TAKEAWAY

Forward-thinking. Thoughtful. Functional. On-trend. Test every styling concept you're shown against those four words.

Five Questions Your Styling Brief Should Answer.

Most styling briefs we see miss at least two of these. A clean brief answers all five before the first supplier is locked.

01 WHAT'S THE BRAND?

Not just logo and colours. Tone, mood board, current campaign, voice, personality. Send your brand guidelines, your latest brand deck, and any reference imagery the brand team is currently working from. The styling should feel like an extension of the brand, not a guess at it.

02 WHAT'S THE BRIEF?

What's the activation actually for? A product launch? A team off-site? A conference keynote? A B2B networking night? Each of those needs a completely different styling approach, and the same hire pack won't work across all of them.

03 WHAT'S THE BUDGET?

Be honest with the number. A stylist who's good with budgets can deliver premium on tight numbers, but only if the number is on the table from day one. Vague briefs end in vague quotes and surprise invoices.

04 WHAT'S THE VENUE AND FLOOR PLAN?

Where's the activation, and what's the layout? Your stylist needs the venue walk-through, the floor plan, the bump-in window, the noise restrictions and the AV setup before they can scope a single piece of decor.

05 WHAT'S THE RUN SHEET?

What's happening, when, and what does each moment need? Arrival drinks, keynote, breakouts, networking, photo opportunity, close. Each beat of the run sheet has a styling implication. The brief should map them out.

TAKEAWAY

Brand. Brief. Budget. Venue. Run sheet. Cover those five and you'll get sharper concepts and cleaner quotes back.

Three Ways To Deliver Premium On A Real Budget.

Most corporate event budgets are tighter than the brand brief asks for. The skill is delivering premium feel on real numbers. Three levers smart event teams use on every brief.

LEVER 01

Prioritise the surfaces that matter most.

Not every surface needs the same investment. The hero moment — entrance, stage, photo corner — deserves the budget. The back-of-room utility surfaces don't. Spending evenly across every touchpoint is the fastest way to look generic. Ask where the budget should sit, and where it shouldn't.

LEVER 02

Smart sourcing over big sourcing.

A few well-sourced statement pieces always outperform a room full of generic hire. Custom florals on the hero table. A signature lighting moment. A branded backdrop that photographs hard. Once the hero pieces land, the rest of the room can flex around them.

LEVER 03

Coordinate with what the venue and vendors already have.

A lot of corporate styling budget gets wasted re-sourcing things the venue, AV team or caterer already has on the floor. Brief a stylist who works alongside your existing vendors — they'll use what's there and only source what the brand actually needs on top.

TAKEAWAY

Premium on a budget isn't about cutting the brand. It's prioritising the right surfaces, sourcing fewer better pieces, and coordinating with what's already in the room.

Where A Styling Specialist Fits Alongside Your Event Manager.

If you're already working with an event management company, here's a clean breakdown of who owns what — and how a styling specialist slots in without stepping on toes.

YOUR EVENT MANAGER

Run sheet, vendor coordination, budget management, venue liaison, AV brief, catering, attendee logistics, day-of run, post-event reporting.

THE VENUE

Floor plan, bump-in window, AV infrastructure, F&B, in-house furniture (if you're using it), venue staff.

YOUR STYLIST

Styling brief, mood board, colour palette, florals, custom decor, stage styling, signage and step-and-repeat integration, on-brand props, on-site setup, post-event pack-down.

HOW TO BRIEF A STYLIST WHEN YOU ALREADY HAVE AN EVENT MANAGER

Loop your event manager into the brief from the first conversation. Make sure the styling brief and the run sheet are aligned — especially around bump-in, build day, and pack-down. Give your stylist direct access to your venue and vendor contacts so they can coordinate without you in the middle.

A good styling specialist makes your event manager's life easier, not harder. They take the styling lane off the event manager's plate, deliver to the run sheet, and hand back a finished room.

TAKEAWAY

Event manager runs the event. Stylist styles the event. They coordinate directly. You stay out of the middle.

What A Clean Activation Looks Like, Brief To Bump-Out.

Here's the timeline a brand-led corporate activation actually runs through, from first email to venue reset.

WEEK 01	<p>The Brief</p> <p>First email or concept call. Brand, brief, budget, venue and run sheet on the table. Your stylist scopes what's possible inside the numbers and timeline before quoting.</p>
WEEK 02-03	<p>The Mood Board</p> <p>Styling brief, colour palette, florals, lighting plan, stage concept, signage integration, custom decor proposals. You review with your team and the event manager. Sign off, or feedback round.</p>
WEEK 03-04	<p>Vendor Lock-In</p> <p>Florists, lighting, custom build, signage, props all locked. Quotes confirmed. Run sheet aligned with the styling brief.</p>
WEEK 04+	<p>Lead-In</p> <p>Final adjustments. Last-minute brand changes. Venue walk-through. Bump-in window confirmed with the venue and event manager.</p>
BUILD DAY	<p>Bump-In</p> <p>The styling team arrives in the bump-in window. Setup runs from floor plan and styling brief. Stage, florals, lighting, signage, lounge, photo corner, bar — all built before guests arrive.</p>
ACTIVATION	<p>Showtime</p> <p>Stylist on-site for last touches and any live changes. Your event manager runs the day. Your team hosts.</p>
POST-EVENT	<p>Bump-Out</p> <p>Pack-down starts at the agreed time. Venue reset. All hire returned. Your team leaves. Stylist closes the loop with a debrief.</p>

TAKEAWAY

A clean activation runs through six tight phases. Brief, mood board, vendor lock, lead-in, bump-in, bump-out. Anyone telling you it's more chaotic than that is improvising.

THE NEXT STEP

A Free Concept Call With Hayley.

If you're scoping a corporate activation, brand launch, conference or product launch in Melbourne and want to walk it through with a stylist before you commit, the next step is a free 30-minute concept call.

YOU'LL WALK AWAY WITH

- A clear sense of what's possible inside your budget and timeline
- A view on how Chantico would approach the styling brief
- Honest feedback on whether the fit is right (no pitch if it's not)

[BOOK YOUR FREE CONCEPT CALL](#)

*No deck. No hard sell. No mystery quote.
Just a 30-minute conversation about your brief.*

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— Hayley Aceski
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