Creating a Convention

<u>Convention Styles</u>
First, when planning your convention, you will need to think about the kind of convention you will be planning. This isn't really something you're going to be writing anywhere, but it's something to think about. A cosplay convention may want to invest in a photo backdrop, while a party con may want to invest in medical staff.

Party Con: A convention can have several attendee-hosted room parties, and have cash hotel bars in easily accessible locations. This does well with some types of older fans.
Cosplay Con: A convention can have a lot of cosplaying attendees, and offer opportunities for photoshoots and more. Anime fans cosplay more than any other fandom, but they are often younger fans.
Community Con: A community convention has a lot of small events throughout the year, including cookouts, staff meetings, game nights, and more. Often raises money for charity. Great for an event where all the organizers are local and have plenty of time for small events.
Star Power Con: A convention can bring in huge stars from recent movies. Stan Lee. Johnny Depp. Robert Downey Jr. However there's a big risk because they ask for huge autograph guarantees. If you don't have enough money and time for marketing, you may never be able to afford to pay them and go bankrupt.
Specialty Guests Con: A convention can focus on special guests that only your fans/friends may want to meet. Maybe 20 people in your city want to meet a certain author, but they may come to your event for cheap, and you could offer an exclusive experience.

Other ideas: Unique foreign culture con. Special video game tournament con. Tabletop gaming con. Relax and make friends con. Dance party con. Music festival con.

<u>Avoid some of these</u>
Washed Up Star Power: It's easy to pick a lot of $3,000 guests... and then have nobody show up to meet them because you didn't market to their fans properly. Be careful. Shows you remember from your childhood may not be as popular as they used to be.
Sixth Con This Week: Starting a convention in an area with a ton of conventions without something new can really hurt.

The five things you need for a convention:
1. A Location and Dates
2. Budget
3. Registration
4. Staff
5. Attendees

Location and Dates
There's no sense in starting a convention with announced dates without a location. What if you pick a weekend that all the venues are full? You will waste precious time having to announce the date change. Negotiate with a venue early and get an idea of your costs. There are countless articles online about negotiating with venues.

Budget
Next, you can't have a convention without knowing how much it will cost. Your venue expenses will be your largest expenses (unless you opt for major star power). Make a spreadsheet and get a total of all costs. Then divide that up by your registration price. $5,000 / $25 means you need 200 people to attend to break even and have your next show. Have realistic attendance targets. A small cosplay convention in the Midwest held at a college might expect only 100 people the first year.

Registration
Selling admission to your event is the only way you'll be able to pay for your costs in the first year. Don't expect a corporation to come "sponsor" you when you have 0 attendees. Money isn't free, and they would rather spend it somewhere they know they have customers – so you have to sell your event to the public instead. Plan your registration prices and then plan how you will accept people's money. These days, very few people register by mail. The internet and credit cards is the number one way to sell event admission now.

Cons.mx is a free website for convention registration. Many ticket company's say "free" when they actually tack-on fees to your attendees ticket prices. Cons.mx is a solution made especially for fandom conventions. Registration money is deposited directly into your Paypal, Stripe, or Dwolla account, so that you can spend it on convention needs immediately.

Staff
Someone has to run the event. Hopefully you have this part already planned – but you can reach out to friends, local anime clubs, and members of the community for help. Don't start your convention without at least some idea of who will be doing what. Someone has to check-in attendees to the event and take their money. Someone has to show guests around. Someone has to talk to the venue.

Attendees
Last, but never least, you need attendees! A convention with awesome guests and super friendly staff is meaningless. You need to have a marketing plan. Plan to make Facebook events, to put up posters on local college boards, and to have your staff help you spread the word.

SAMPLE CONVENTION PLAN
An ideal convention plan will be at least five pages or more.

Convention Name:

Expected Attendance: _____ Total or _____ Per Day

Convention Dates:

CONVENTION TYPE
What events will you have:
Who will be the main guests:
How will you contact people to run events:
Have you asked the guests how much they will cost to attend:

COMPETITION
Nearest similar convention:
What is their admission price:
What are the good things people say about their event:
What are the bad things people say about their event:
How many people attend:

VENUE
How much space does the event need:
Is there an exhibit hall:
Is there a stage:
Are there panel rooms:
Are there tabletop gaming areas:
Are there video game rooms:
Do you need internet for video games:
List of potential venues:
Cost of each venue after discussing with them:

REGISTRATION
Average ticket price:
Premium ticket price:
Premium ticket benefits:
What website will you use to sell tickets:
Why this website:
How much will the ticket selling cost in fees:

MARKETING
Where can you put up posters:
Where can you hand out flyers:
Which social media sites will you utilize:
What other marketing ideas do you have:

For more ideas what to include in your plan, look up business plans online. Even if your convention is not a "business" you need to treat it like one.