

Title:

Simple Headache Cure For Event Managers

Word Count:

738

Summary:

Managing or administering a seminar, workshop, roadshow or other type of event, even the seemingly simple, can provide you with headaches that you never thought possible. Being crystal clear about what you and your company actually needs the event to deliver at the earliest possible stage is critical to so many issues.

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Keywords:

online booking, event managment,booking mananger, booking, registration

Article Body:

Managing or administering a seminar, workshop, roadshow or other type of event, even the seemingly simple, can provide you with headaches that you never thought possible. Being crystal clear about what you and your company actually needs the event to deliver at the earliest possible stage is critical to so many issues.

Although holding an event like a seminar or a workshop often evolves out of discussions about sales, marketing and even technical issues like product failures, it is almost always critical to establish clearly in everyone's mind what the true purpose of the event is. This can have a substantial effect on:

- * how you go about organizing the event
- * who you involve
- * which venue you choose
- * what you choose to include and exclude
- * the dates and times of the various activities
- * and significantly why you are holding an event at all

The event manager should get together with the prime-movers in the organization who effectively "own" the event and discuss the true objective or perhaps objectives to be achieved.

The word "objective" is used intentionally here because there may already be an objective-setting ethos in your organization. If there is, then use the same framework to arrive at consensus for the purpose of the event.

The minimum requirement is that the objective should be SMART;

- * Specific
 - * Measurable
 - * Achievable
 - * Relevant
 - * Time-bounded
- Specific

The word "specific" has been chosen as shorthand for the question:

"What, specifically, will have changed as a result of the success of this event?"

To illustrate this consider the example of a Financial Services organization that was having difficulty selling one of its new investment product (Product Y) because of its complexity. They were convinced that the product was a winner but needed Financial Advisers to spend more than a ten minute telephone call learning about how it was structured and how it would perform over time. They also needed to connect with more Financial Advisers than they already knew, so the idea of a conference to debate the new generation of financial products for the 21 st Century was born.

The Financial Services company defined their specific requirement from the conference as follows:

To present, along with other Financial Products, a detailed technical explanation of Product Y to an audience of 250 or more Financial Advisers who operate within our region in order that they can understand its benefits and sell it on to their customers.

Measurable

In almost every project there is a well understood relationship between cost, quality and time. You can achieve anything to a very high standard in a very short time if cost is no object. Similarly you can produce the best product to a tight budget as long as time is not an issue. The third option is probably the world you operate in; the budget is small and we need it yesterday. This, of course, means that quality is the issue most likely to suffer and is probably worth some debate about what level of quality is expected and how it should be measured.

Post-event questionnaires and follow-up telephone or Email communication should be asking the right questions to ensure that quality data is available.

Achievable

The event organizer needs to be set up for success and needs to feel that they have the support of the event "owners" on the route ahead. In short, they need to know how to get rapid decisions made if quality, cost or time are affected by issues that develop as the project proceeds.

Relevant

It is sensible to confirm with the overall aims of the organization that the event and the way it is being envisioned correspond. If a company mission or vision exists, then there should be a straight line of logic linking it with this seminar, roadshow or workshop.

Timebounded

Priorities can often be forgotten when an attractive project happens along. So, not only should the relevant dates, times and durations be spelled out in detail, the effect of this project on other work should be discussed and appropriate action taken to ensure that all timescales are properly managed.

Equipped with this seemingly simple step of devising a comprehensive objective, you, as the event manager, are better equipped to make informed decisions about almost any issue that crops up in the design, delivery and follow-up processes associated with your event. Even better, it will reduce your consumption of pain killers by minimizing headache inducing changes and problems down the line.