

How to set an internal pace to deliver a quality audience at your event

Earlier this year, I had the pleasure of speaking with Joel Davis, President of JD Events. Joel has the reputation and experience of reviving struggling events, making them viable, then selling them off at a healthy profit. One of my common themes in these articles has been that the hardest job in the business of events is getting a quality audience. With that in mind, what does an event organizer do internally to 'set the pace' in organization to attain priorities such as delivering a quality audience? Our conversation led to agreement on seven items:

1) Build a staff has a culture and passion for delivering an audience.

At JD Events, the entire staff has a deep understanding that delivering an audience is key to remaining profitable, so all of the major decisions, and much of the day to day running of the business is run through an 'audience delivery filter'. New staff are hired with this quality in mind

2) Don't forget the power of human touch.

One of Joel's products is KioskCom Conference and Expo(<http://www.kioskcom.com/>), an event devoted to the delivery of self service. While automated service is becoming more and more important as you deal with customers, Joel's staff still makes a point of keeping in touch with all of the stakeholders of all of their events, by phone, email or in person.

3) Focus on priorities not on meetings and reports.

Joel's staff are empowered to get projects done, and are more flexible than many event organizers I've seen. Once a decision is made, team members spend their precious time on getting to their objectives not on endless status meetings or writing reports. The reporting are done less formally and on an 'as needed" basis. This also is a sub-textual way of communicating trust in your staff as well.

4) If you want a top audience, pick top marketing people.

This was mentioned in my Carl Pugh article earlier this month(which can be found here(<http://www.siso.org/updates/051208.html#A>), and it makes sense. If you empower your staff, make them the best people you can find, so you don't sweat at 11PM worrying if the right decisions are being made. Spending \$10k in additional salary is worth it if they can deliver a lot of top quality attendees to your events.

5)Spend money where necessary and be flexible with budgets.

In order to get where you are going, you need plans(and budgets). Sometimes though, you need to make decisions that reverse directions made, in order to take advantage of new developments. Encourage staff to continue to think on how to improve performance of marketing, even if those depart from the business plan. Be smart and flexible.

6) Don't allow in non-qualified people to your events.

A little controversial maybe, but in general correct. I know of events where you have to apply to be admitted, and they actually turn people away willing to pay \$1700 to get in! The result? A highly qualified audience, and a cache of being 'the place to be'. You may bite your nails hoping to get enough of the 'right' attendees, but if you can do it, it will pay off.

7) Ensure the continuity of staff.

Staff turnover has many unpleasant consequences, the main one being the amount of information and relationships they carry away with them when they leave(some people call this "the glue which holds the event together"). When you lose key staff members, especially customer facing ones, you have to spend time training new staff getting the place where the departing person was, so you can resume where you were. The key to avoiding unnecessary staff turnover is preventing it happening in the first place by arranging career paths and encouraging enthusiasm both in the workplace and for the markets in which the staff find themselves a part.

Most of these tips are applicable beyond the audience development realm, so you don't need to be from that are to take advantage! Coming from someone as identifiable successful as Joel has been(and still is), you'd be smart to figure out how to apply these to your own operation!

And now a PS on me. As you can see, I am no longer The Event Doctor! but am now The Event Mechanic! Why? Well in the course of working with a number of customers, I found myself actually 'rolling the sleeves' and helping the customer execute the strategies I have helped devised. I felt also that the 'roadside assistance' aspect of what I do made it incumbent to find a company closer to the world of my work, so please welcome The Event Mechanic!

Warwick Davies is the Principal of The Event Mechanic!, a consulting company which helps event organizers realize greater revenues and profits by fixing 'broken' events and launch new ones both in United States and internationally . His clients include event organizers in the information technology, healthcare, biotechnology construction and design engineering and executive event markets. Previously, Warwick was responsible for internationally recognizable event brands such as Macworld Conference and Expo, LinuxWorld Conference and Expo, and the Customer Relationship Management Conference and Exposition worldwide. For more information on The Event Mechanic! and past SISO The Event Doctor! columns please visit <http://www.theeventmechanic.com/resources.html> . He can be reached at Warwick@theeventmechanic.com or at 781 354 0119.