the business of international events

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4 WAYS YOUR EVENT OFFICE CAN ADDRESS COUNCIL PRIORITIES

Whether you produce festivals and events for a small municipality or manage permitting and production for a large city, balancing the needs of event organizers, government staff, agencies, and Council members can be overwhelming.

As I mentioned in the previous #eventpermit article *(5 Ways Your Event Office Can Improve Customer Service)*, delivering great customer service can go a long way in reducing processing bottlenecks, opening up the lines of communication with your stakeholders, and improving how you interact with and serve event organizers. But good service means different things to different stakeholders. For elected officials, good customer service is achieved by addressing their key priorities. Here are four strategic priorities we heard about over and over again from our clients in 2017.

1. Economic Development.

Economic development strategies are now common place as nations, states and communities compete for jobs, economic output, and taxable bases. Even though events help create a sense of place, improve quality of life, and attract tourists, municipalities are under increased pressure to demonstrate their direct economic value. If you haven't been collecting information to measure new economic activity, jobs created, and how many new tax dollars filtered into your community as a result of events, it's time to start now. It's simple and before you know it, you'll have enough data to demonstrate economic value to your Council. Consider developing an event participant survey and a post event wrap report that can easily be completed during and following events; this will help capture comprehensive, consistent and meaningful data directly from event attendees and from the event organizer.

Measuring the economic impact of event tourism can help you secure local or regional funding/budget, apply for grants to grow event tourism, and promote the value of events to the broader business sector. For more information about event tourism surveys and measuring the impact of events, visit Destination BC's *Guidelines: Survey Procedures for Tourism Economic Impact Assessments of Gated Events and Festival*.

2. Process Improvement.

Process improvement is a proactive way of looking for cost savings while continuing to deliver quality standards. For example, start by looking at how long it takes for your Event Office to process an application based on the size and duration of an event. This will help you determine the taxpayer cost per event day in your community and the cost of processing a permit application. You can then further break down each step in the approval process to identify any bottle necks. A common bottleneck we see in event permitting is the time it takes to approve permits. By delegating authority to staff to approve event permits, you'll save hours of time preparing reports for Council, drastically reduce the amount of administrative support for each event permit, and expedite event permit approvals.

3. Digital.

Online is the new normal, and with more pressure by taxpayers to make information transparent, real-time and accessible from anywhere, municipalities are developing Digital Strategies to guide their digital transformation. However, this shift has been slow especially for non-legislated functions such as film and event permitting. Similarly, the event industry knows that it will lose out if it does not continue to evolve the digital experience it delivers to its customers. A customer can easily elect to use their device to experience what they otherwise could have experienced at an event venue (e.g. music or sporting event). When there is so much pressure on municipalities and events to go digital and there are many cost benefits associated with the shift, it's time for event permitting to go online. Digital applications, approval workflow and permit issuance also enables your Event Office to capture meaningful data, improve reporting, reduce administrative costs, and, yes, you guessed it – deliver better customer service!

4. Transparency.

Data transparency can also help with unifying event data for all departments and stakeholders; this means you reduce the chance of duplication of information and effort, misinformation, and miscommunication to event producers. Moving processes online makes transparency infinitely easier to manage, and also improves Council's access to real-time information so they, too, can provide answers to their constituents in real-time.

Economic development, process improvement, going digital, and improving transparency were just a few government priorities we heard about in 2017. Will these change in 2018? Will there be new Council priorities that will affect how Event Offices manage events?

If you work in an Event Office and want to share your thoughts on addressing Council priorities, I'd love to hear from you. Join the conversation on Twitter by using the hashtag, #eventpermit.

In the next issue of "ie" Magazine, I'll discuss why there's so much more to event tourism than just hosting events.

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