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6 WAYS AN EVENT OFFICE CAN BETTER SUPPORT EVENTS

Event Offices are more than just a permit issuing agency. As I've discussed in past columns, they play a central role in growing event tourism and building a calendar of events that animate and enrich their community. By providing invaluable tools, resources and advice to event organizers, Event Offices can streamline their own permitting process and help organizers navigate the often-complex event production landscape.

These six recommendations are just a few examples of how an Event Office can elevate how they support events.

1. Maps & Floorplans

If Event Offices rely solely on event organizers to develop maps of public spaces and venues, they run the risk of them being inconsistent, erroneous, and lacking in detail. Event Offices should invest in developing easy-to-use digital maps and floor plans of each public venue including parks and fields, community halls, recreation centers, and theatres. Standardized maps and floorplans should include capacities, correct dimensions, allowable setbacks, emergency exits, allowable parking, and access to water and power. Each map should be easily downloadable from the government's website. Maps should also be offered in different formats such as Microsoft Word (DOC), image or compressed file (JPEG, PDF), and CAD file (e.g. DWG).

2. Event Management Plan Templates

As mentioned in the last #eventpermit column, event management plans are invaluable tools especially for larger events. These plans are typically associated with different functions of an event and are developed by the event organizer in collaboration with local governing agencies and stakeholders. They help capture logistical details and address the needs and expectations of the community in an effort to avoid surprises. Event Offices can assist smaller events (that may not have the expertise or resources to develop plans) by creating basic downloadable event management plan templates, e.g. waste management plan, traffic management plan, fire safety plan.

3. Comprehensive Fee Schedules

Many events are produced by volunteers who have limited to no experience producing events. What may seem logical to an experienced event organizer, or Event Office staff, could be very confusing to some. Furthermore, knowing about fees up front will help an event avoid hidden costs and alleviate permitting frustrations. An Event Office should develop a clear, detailed schedule of all fees and deposits that may be charged to an event. This includes fees charged directly by the Event Office (e.g. permit processing fee, damage deposit), plus fees and deposits charged by other departments and agencies, e.g. road closures, temporary event permits, health and safety permits, and electrical permits.

4. Links to Agency Regulations & Resources

In the absence of an overarching agency to assist event organizers with navigating what it takes to host an event in your community, the complexity of event production can cause confusion, and lead to unsafe, unpermitted or cancelled events. Don't just focus on the permitting portion of hosting an event in your community. Help events understand all of the permits they may need, the agencies they should engage, and share links to agency applications and contacts. Creating more of a one-stop-shop for events will help them be more informed and prepared and help to ensure a successful event.

5. Event Partners & Mentors

Unfortunately, most event organizers, especially newbies, are learning the event ropes from scratch with little experienced guidance. An Event Office can offer an incredible service to organizers by sharing their expertise and connecting them with experienced event organizers. Creating a type of mentor program amongst event organizers (especially those in non-competitive event spaces) and connecting organizers with partners will only strengthen event planning and execution.

6. Volunteer Best Practices & Resources

Raising money and event production are the two most common activities in which volunteers are engaged. However, in communities where there is an abundance of annual events, volunteers can experience burnout. Providing creative ways to engage and retain volunteers is incredibly valuable to event organizers. With lack of time often being the biggest barrier to people volunteering, recommending shorter shifts and limiting pre and post event attendance highly are recommended.

What types of tools and resources does your Event Office offer event organizers to help them be more successful in your community? Share your feedback by joining the conversation on Twitter and using the hashtag, #eventpermit.

Rene Michaely is the founder and chief visionary of eproval, a software platform designed to automate and streamline complex application and approval processes including event permits. Based in Vancouver, BC Canada, his team has an intimate understanding of government permitting and approval processes through their experience working with and for event offices. Rene has also been a product manager at an event registration startup and founder of a web development firm specializing in event websites and complex applications. You can reach Rene at rene@eproval.com, learn more about eproval at www.eproval.com, or follow @eproval.