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COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT ARE THE BACKBONE OF A ROBUST SPECIAL EVENT PERMITTING SOLUTION

At a time when there is rapid digital disruption in the public sector, when citizens are demanding timely information and transparency, and elected officials are turning to community engagement to support decision-making, the role of external communications is vital. However, effective and timely communication doesn't always take priority internally in government agencies. This is especially the case for non-legislated departments and processes such as special events, filming, and other types of specialized permitting.

Effective communication (internal or external) starts with good information, i.e. information that is accurate, complete, consistent, unique, and accessible in real-time. Yes, replacing analog processes with digital solutions can meet many of these requirements, however, if you don't select the right solution from the outset–and carefully manage its implementation and use–going digital can be just as painful and ineffectual as the manual processes it's replacing.

When a Special Event Office is ready to select a new digital solution to support application and permit processing, staff may want to consider the following features and functionality that will ultimately support effective communications and information management:

- Does the solution specifically support the complex approval workflow processes of special event permitting, or was it chiefly designed for other government processes?
- Is it customizable so that it can be used for other, less complex, permitting processes (e.g. filming, grants, road closures, etc.)?
- Does it integrate well with existing enterprise and legacy systems such as email, GIS, public calendars, and finance?
- Does it support interdepartmental, interagency and applicant-direct communications and information storage for external events as well as events hosted internally by the Special Event Office?
- Are government staff and external agencies able to email event organizers (i.e. applicants) directly?
- Was the solution designed with automated features such as scheduled email notifications to reduce the amount of time spent following up on application approvals?
- Does it support central storage of all data, including applications, supporting documentation, reviews, approvals, communication between all users, financial data, issued permits, debriefs, and survey data?
- Can users access the solution (including all documents and communications) anytime, from any device?

Although not directly linked to communications and information management, it's also beneficial that the Special Event Office staff consider a solution that enables:

- Staff to easily, and self-sufficiently, modify the application process;
- Staff to issue invoices and collect fees during and after the application review and approval process;
- Staff to query information in the system to identify process bottlenecks and opportunities for process improvement;
- User insight into application data, e.g. staff can generate and print reports from a central source; and
- Staff to create post-event surveys so that they can collect data and measure the impact, success and growth of events in their community.

Communication and information management are the backbone of a robust event permitting solution and should be paid careful consideration when evaluating potential solutions. Equally important is the implementation of a solution. Selecting a solution that is supported by a clear and tested change management strategy, user training, and responsive user support can make or break the implementation and its adoption.

Does your Special Event Office struggle with internal and external communications and information management? Have you selected a solution that has significantly improved the way you manage communications in your Special Event Office? Share your feedback by joining the conversation on Twitter and using the hashtag, #eventpermit.

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