



Getting Ready for Major Events

This summer much of the world's eyes will be on London, England and the Summer Olympic Games as the world premier sporting event begins on 27 July.

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Needless to say, such a major event even for a city as large as London is no simple matter. Organising such a major event is no easy matter.

For example, the Olympics will have over 23,000 security professionals. It is estimated security alone will cost more than one billion British pound sterling (about US\$1.6 billion).

The cost for running a major event is so high that there are those who joke that the cities that lost their Olympic bid are really the winners.

As in any major event, what really matters is not the initial cost of the event but the event's afterglow.

If the event is successful, then its long-term impact is such that the locale will more than recover its initial outlay.

On the other hand, if the event has a major crisis or receives negative publicity, then the investment was not only a mistake but the locale should be prepared for both negative publicity and potential political upheaval.

Although most cities will never host an event as large as an Olympic games, major events are an ever greater part of many locales' tourism offerings.

We may argue that from the perspective of the event's manager, every event is a major event and whenever

people come to your community they judge it on the same scale as if it were an Olympic event.

From this perspective whenever a city or locale hosts an event, be it a sporting, political or business event, the event should be seen as a major event.

To help you prepare for your events (no matter what the size), here are some suggestions.

Sporting and Political Events

You only have to read any newspaper around the world to determine the impact of spectator sports. For example, World Cup soccer is probably the world's most single viewed event.

While not every city will host World Cup games, locales around the world host a variety of sporting and political events.

From soccer games to college football, tennis matches to swim meets, political conventions to election rallies, each of these events plays its part in the tourism industry.

When preparing for a sporting or political event, no matter what the size consider the following ways to turn a spectator event into an interactive and unforgettable experience:

• Sport events add not only to your economy but also to your community's visitors' health and fitness.

The desire for good health and sound body are also part of

sports tourism. In your tourism brochures, make sure you list where the gymnasiums are located and where the public sporting facilities are. Do not forget to list up-to-date schedules and entrance costs.

• Know the condition of your community's athletic facilities.

There is perhaps nothing as destructive for a tourist industry as sending someone to an athletic facility that is in a state of disrepair. If your community's pool is in poor condition, it is preferable not to advertise the pool. If your participatory sporting facilities are not up to par, do not promote them.

• Maintain good medical lists and post emergency numbers in places where athletic events take place.

All sporting events have an element of risk. This risk is even more hazardous to the tourist who may not know where to seek medical help in case of an emergency. Your posted materials should include 24-hour pharmacies, hospital emergency rooms, as well as doctors and dentists who are willing to see out-of-town guests.

• Consider the legal consequences of athletic events.

In today's society where litigation has become a way of life, check with your community's law offices about the need for waivers

when conducting public tournaments. It is always a good idea to review all athletic facilities that you promote with your legal staff.

- **When it comes to smaller events, improve on your name recognition.**

Do not miss the opportunity to obtain greater name recognition from your local athletic events and tournaments. Notify the media well in advance of the event and get brilliant results by putting local champions' photos in newspapers, on television and on your website.

Business and Family Events

Family and business events such as trade shows have long been an important part of the tourism industries.

From weddings to bar mitzvahs, family reunions to business meetings and conventions, these events add a great deal of income to local economies.

In some cases, trade shows and business meetings can be massive undertakings involving tens of thousands of people.

In other cases, the family

or business event is much more intimate, but in all cases these are opportunities not only to make money but to showcase your community and gain return visitations.

From the perspective of the tourism industry these business and personal events provide a number of important challenges and opportunities.

For example, even a small or medium size trade show may attract as many as 10,000 people from out-of-town who will fill hotel rooms and eat at local establishments.

For many of the reasons mentioned above, tourism professionals compete to gain trade show market share.

They also realise that people who come to their community for trade shows may return at a later time for additional recreation and fun.

In order to obtain the best results from meetings consider the following:

- **Provide clear and precise information about what services the local community can provide to and for trade show hosts, family hosts, guests and participants.** Make sure that your

community's information appears in a font size that is easy for most people to read.

In a like manner provide information regarding secondary and tertiary site locations that is clear and not cluttered.

To avoid these problems create "Trade show check lists" that can be reviewed with the tradeshow organisers prior to the start of the show.

- **Do not overestimate what you can handle.**

Many communities "bite off" more than they can chew.

Remember that the success of a trade show is determined not only by what takes place within the show but also by what goes on off the trade show floor.

- **Use security as a selling tool to attract business meetings, trade shows and even family events.** Encourage people to consider post-trade show or family reunion vacations in your community.

These events are places where all sorts of merchandise are available and are soft target spots for pilferage.

One way to gain new events is to demonstrate to potential hosts that there is a total security plan and that the local police department has been trained in tourism security issues.

- **Be generous.**

Think of give-away bags promoting local products and services, interesting posters and regular information updates on things to do before and after trade show hours.

Make sure that your community is part of the local trade show, business meeting or family gather rather than merely as passive location in

which the trade show occurs.


In the case of business conventions and trade shows, ask yourself who is exhibiting in your community and what special needs to these exhibitors.

The best way to get brilliant results in attracting trade shows is to demonstrate that you understand what the trade shows' hosts' needs are and that you have a plan to meet their needs.

Make sure you demonstrate to the trade show host that you understand who their target audience is and the message that they are trying to get across.

Take the time to ask the organisers how they will define a successful show and what part the local tourism industry can play in making sure that they meet their objectives.

Remember that there are really two shows occurring at the same time. The first is the actual trade show in which merchants are exhibiting products. The second trade show is that your community is also on exhibit.

To gain brilliant results use the personal touch and a sense of caring to distinguish your community from other communities that are also seeking to attract the trade show business. 

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This Indian wedding, with international guest list, brings revenue to the local tourism industry