

Developing Successful Sponsorship

By Nancy Ginter-Miller



Successful sponsorship for your event can come in many forms. We've all heard that before, but have you creatively reached out for sponsorship in a new way recently? A festival planner recently told me their event sold out all the hotel rooms in town but they did not have any special room rates for the festival attendees or vendors. The hotels would just as soon raise the rates when their event came to town. Their entire event was held outside, away from the hotels and a lot of food was sold at their event. Sponsorship opportunities were missed.

What effect will your event have on the community and other business properties in the area? Do you make an effort to get them involved in your event and work with a host hotel or resort? You should, because the more marketing partners you have the better your event will be, with everyone pitching in for the same successful goals. Hotels make money selling room nights along with food and beverage revenue. Is your event going to have a negative for a positive effect on either of these revenue sources? You can make it financially beneficial for everyone involved by working together, planning ahead and getting creative. Create a new sponsorship partner.

Food and Beverage Revenue

Food and beverage revenue is forecast from the number of room nights and the length of the guest's stay. A resort property can expect 2 of the 3 daily meals to be eaten at the resort, while a convention hotel may only get meal revenue from the convention if luncheons and dinner receptions are hosted. Many festivals and events take place outside in parks or other large open areas and offer up great regional foods, so

Opportunities for the Event Planner

the festival attendee is probably going to eat at the event not at the hotel. That means very limited food and beverage revenue for the hotel property. However, there are other ways to work together. The festival could host a welcome reception or closing dinner ceremony at the hotel, include a complimentary beverage or appetizer ticket for each participant to encourage use of the restaurant facilities, a discount coupon to the gift shop or an upgrade for a spa treatment. There is an extensive range of goods and services you can promote together and increase guest satisfaction. Remember to ask the resort or hotel what would make them happy. You can negotiate hours of service, price, portions, number of selections, self-service or full-service and be sure to ask if they would like to become a sponsor! A little extra effort working together can create a new partnership. There are always learning curves and growing pains, but if the event is popular and returns each year the partnership will be mutually beneficial for everyone involved.

Rooms – Hotel or Resort

How many rooms will be needed and what type of attendees will be at your event? This will often determine what type of property your festival or event should work with. What effect will your event or attendees have on the other guests of the property? Is it a convention hotel or a resort? Since resort guests pay to be pampered, a resort will only have a limited number of group rooms available. It is important that the resort guest experience stay in place. In convention hotels, numerous events may be scheduled simultaneously and there will be large groups of people networking. Setting guidelines for your group and planning activities in advance can help avoid awkward situations.

Hotels will expect the event group to guarantee a block of rooms at a set price. Rarely is an entire hotel reserved for one group. Repeat customers are a vital part of the industry, so they will always need to accommodate other guests. The hotel will set a cut-off date when the special room rate is no longer available to group attendees. Only very expensive room

rates will be available during certain busy times of the year. Just think about it like the airlines do, it's all inventory and rate control. The hotel would prefer to sell the rooms early and have reservations guaranteed with staff in place than to sell rooms at the last minute and scramble to accommodate everyone at an unexpected high occupancy.

Options

If you choose a resort rather than a hotel, reserve an area for the group where you can mingle away from the vacationing honeymooners. Arrangements should work for both parties involved. The resort may offer to set up a bar for your group or present special entertainment to their other resort guests during your event. Are your closing night ceremonies going to include a band or DJ, will it be held outside where other guests will hear it, will they enjoy it as much as you? In Hawai'i no one complains when there is Hawaiian music in the air. Play some rock and roll at your party and it might be a different story with vacationing guests. What's the age group at the resort or hotel? Are you at a five star resort or a three star convention group hotel? How late do you expect to celebrate, after all, you just finished a successful event that took 11 months of planning and in three days it is all over for another year! Be sure to ask the host property - they may be able to accommodate the group rooms on one side of the resort where some late evening noise wouldn't bother other guests. If you know you're going to do it, work with the property and prepare so everyone can have a great experience. Working together builds strong successful relationships.

Packages

Does your event require meeting and event space but not too many rooms? One way to balance that out is to arrange to offer a great value added room package that would include event tickets, parking or transportation and an upgraded room category with breakfast the next day. Have a VIP package and offer the best - attendees often travel far and plan ahead for the experience, so offer them something luxurious. Depending on the size of the

event you could work with several hotels. A travel agency may want to work with the event planner and help coordinate packages with airline travel. The overall experience for the attendee will positively increase and the room, food and beverage revenue for the hotel will increase. Most hotels will market the special room package for you and feature it on their reservations webpage. The hotel builds their room revenue and improves the guest experience. Negotiated rates, discounts, coupons and upgrades are all forms of sponsorship.

What is going to be negotiable? Labor is not going to be negotiable. If you have a dinner event with service, the labor for the service is not going to be negotiable. The room rental fee for the ballroom is negotiable. Would it be empty if you weren't there? Are you spending your fair share - cocktail reception with appetizers, buffet dinner or a sit-down dinner with full-service and hosted bar? Ask if there is a break-even amount to avoid rental fees. Are you employing the personnel or just using the space? Are you hosting coffee, juice and muffins? It will make a difference. If you are just using the space for a meeting or tradeshow there will probably be a rental fee. Also, if it is appropriate, offer to have someone from the hotel speak at your event, they become part of your event, sharing the experience. Remember to acknowledge their hard work and support.

Working together with your host hotel or resort can be a challenge, but it can also add to the success of your event. By exploring new options, you can create new sponsorship opportunities and host a successful event for everyone involved.

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