



Event Management Lessons From Steve Jobs

By Marvin McTaw

Steve Jobs was a transformational character. He brought back Apple from the brink of death and along the way, transformed entire industries. After his passing, his biographer highlighted 14 imperatives behind the Job's approach. Here's how those 14 points apply to the Events Industry.

Focus

Determine your event's one main goal and aim everything you do to accomplishing that goal. You don't need to cover every topic that's even tangentially connected to your goal. It's a waste of everyone's time and resources. Know your goal and execute to achieve that one goal.

Simplify

Feel like you're doing too much? Then simplify your event. Stop over-scheduling attendees. Cut down the number of tracks, venues...and attendees! Your organization can not do everything. Once you've decided on your focus, then cut out everything else that is not helping you to achieve that goal. You may step on some toes or step on some sacred cows but to achieve excellence, you must simplify.

Take Responsibility End-To-End

You must take responsibility for the entire experience before, during and after the event. This applies not only for your attendees but for everyone involved including volunteers, staff, sponsors and exhibitors. A/V, transportation, food, lodging, logistics, contracts, speakers, content, handouts, technology. Everything is important and influences the perception of your event. You can only take responsibility for these things once you've focused on your one true goal and simplified as much as possible.

When Behind, Leapfrog

Feeling pressure from your competitors? Stop trying to copy everything your competitors do. Re-think your entire event's experience and out-execute by knowing and understanding what people really want from events like yours. You can achieve much of this by listening.

Put Products Before Profits

As an event organizer, your product is the event experience. If you focus on creating an incredible experience and marketing that experience, everything else will fall into place.

Don't Be A Slave To Focus Groups

Focus groups in the context of events are usually attendee based surveys and anecdotal feedback. Most people do not know what they want in the first place and surveys are usually not the best way to get feedback. Instead of relying on focus group try to understand the real underlying issues

Bend Reality

Regardless of whether it's a training meeting or a music festival you should get people out of their day to day routine. To do this, you must bend reality to accomplish your goals. To help you accomplish this, offer unexpected and unique experiences, not simply just the status quo.

Impute

Envision your end goal and then figure out what you need to do to accomplish it. Start with your focus and after you've simplified, you should be able to figure out how it comes together not only with the big picture but also the details.

Push For Perfection

Your event should be perfect for everyone involved: speakers, sponsors, exhibitors, attendees, in short, everyone! Focusing and simplifying will help you to realistically shoot for perfection in everything you do.

Know Both The Big Picture & The Details

Make sure you know your event's overarching goal and that you are also intimately familiar with the details. You can only realistically do this if you follow the first two steps of focusing and simplifying what you do. Knowing both the big picture and details can also help you to achieve perfection by preventing

problems in the first place and addressing them when they arrive.

Tolerate Only "A" Players

Bring quality people to work with you, including volunteers. No member of your team should be the weakest link. If you have sub-par people in your system, either remove them or give them the resources they need to be successful. It's important to note that simply having "A" Players isn't enough. You need to delegate authority to them and allow them to help you accomplish your goal.

Engage Face-To-Face

This doesn't mean just at the event. Engage with vendors, speakers and others face-to-face. This will help you to be more effective in executing your event.

Combine the Humanities with the Sciences

Events are in the business of creating experience. While you should definitely be concerned with the numbers, you must be sure to bring more to the plate. Make sure you're bringing more to the table than only numbers and sense.

"Stay Hungry, Stay Foolish"

This is critical to your event's success. Don't just keep doing the same thing because you've done it forever. Take risks, try new things and encourage an environment where you're willing to fail and learn from it.

Marvin McTaw is a Partner at SCHED* - a simple yet powerful event calendar, personal agenda builder and social networking tool. Conference and festival organizers can use Sched.org to manage their website's schedule of events, seamlessly integrate social networking and provide their attendees with tools like personal agenda builders, dynamic attendee directories and mobile applications. For more information, goto www.sched.org