

demographics, or utilized the abundance of secondary research that is available.

In the past twenty years, we have gone from a handful of research journals in our industry to hundreds at our fingertips. Data is beyond available and accessible, it is quite overwhelming. Never has there been a more important time to strategically evaluate how we gather, engage, and use data to provide insight for our festivals and events. There is no better and more important time to learn to integrate research practices into our regular operation. It will become the way we do business, and the way we make more informed, more educated, and more effective decisions.

What these data highlighted about our industry is, although we value it and want more; there are many barriers to doing so. And, I'm certain, not at all surprising to you, time is by far the most frequent reason listed. However, I'd say to you, is it time? Or, is it not a priority?... as time will always be a barrier to any business action. My hope is by addressing these barriers, gathering and utilizing research will be more of a priority and it will benefit your festival/event.

Other noted barriers often listed in why limited data gathering/use include money, access, and knowledge on how to find and gather it. In this column we will look at techniques or thoughts on how to reduce these barriers. I would be naïve to think anything I talk about in this column would be of value to you until we do so. And, I have to address these issues in order to fulfill the column's objectives (remember, I want to get you thinking, and using it more often to help you make more enlightened decisions).

If these 50 organizations are like you and my first thoughts have you thinking about your own attitude regarding research, and your festival or event's research practices, my hope is a column dedicated to this topic will help you to find ways to be more strategic in your research practices. In every publication, 1,000 words will be dedicated to it.

Tell me what you think about the new column, and what interests you have while exploring this topic together. In the meantime, I can't wait to start a conversation in the next "ie" publication about understanding the expectations of our stakeholders. We can improve knowing more than just

how satisfied they are...let's find what is important to them and prioritize decisions based on their insight.

Patty Janes loves how accurate data helps organizations improve. She is a faculty member and industry professional at Grand Valley State University's, Hospitality and Tourism Management department. For over 25 years, her teaching, research and consulting specialties include marketing, research, and training in the festival/events, and hospitality industry. In 2015, she completed research projects for several festivals in Michigan including the National Cherry Festival. She also spearheads a non-profit event organization bringing tourism industry professionals together to volunteer and help restore historic tourism attractions, build a stronger tourism community, and market tourism destinations (www.michigancaresfortourism.com). Connect with Patty at janesp@gvsu.edu, and/or (989) 424-0123.