



## 5 WAYS YOUR EVENT OFFICE CAN IMPROVE

# CUSTOMER SERVICE

**A**pplying for a city permit to host an event on public land is common practice in most communities. Unfortunately, application processes are usually paper-based, arduous for both the applicant and the approving Event Office, and can take an exorbitant amount of time to approve (in some cases, months prior to an event). Overhauling your application process may seem daunting, but there are a few simple changes your Event Office can implement that will improve customer service, make your life easier, and hopefully reduce overall administrative costs.

## 1. Make sure your permit application is clear and concise.

Event organizers are intrinsically passionate, but event production likely isn't their area of expertise or what pays the bills. Navigating an event permit application may be daunting for a novice applicant, or even worse, feel like unnecessary red tape. It's up to the Event Office to ensure the application is clear, concise, and well explained. Invite staff from another department to complete your form and welcome feedback from event organizers on their permitting experience. Do this regularly to ensure your form remains current and efficient. Small tweaks to your form could make a world of difference for a novice event organizer.

## 2. Get everything online.

It's fair to say that providing access to information, forms, and templates online is now expected. Make sure that you have all of the required documents easy to access on your website. The more tools you can provide online, the easier it will be for event organizers to self-serve and the less time you will spend answering emails and calls requesting the same information, over and over again. Consider providing templates for waste and traffic management plans, maps of public parks, an emergency plan template, or event suggested questions that could be included on an economic impact event survey. By adding useful tools to your website, you will add value to the permitting process and streamline the information used and submitted by events.

## 3. Be transparent.

Provide a simple step-by-step breakdown of the approval process and how long it can be expected to receive an event permit. If processing times vary from month to month, especially if you have only one or two intakes for permits, then update these times regularly on your website. By advertising how long an event organizer can expect to wait for a permit, you are removing the veil of mystic often associated with

government approvals, and helping event organizers to determine how early they should be submitting their application.

## 4. Debrief, debrief.

Event debriefs can provide valuable insight into what worked and what needs improvement especially for recurring events. Event debriefs with the event organizer and with other approving departments and agencies can help bring to light small, and big, issues that may have otherwise gone overlooked. Debriefs also help identify how events impact citizens, visitors, and businesses. By addressing issues after or before they arise, you're also delivering good customer service to the broader community.

## 5. Green light events.

Producing an event is no small feat. Most event organizers find themselves busier than they ever imagined, juggling location requirements, programming, advertising and marketing, waste management, traffic management, health & safety, liquor permits, volunteers, and so on and so on. Waiting for an event permit and not knowing if an event will be approved, can cause undue stress and delays in event production. If an event meets some basic/minimum requirements (e.g. the location is available, the event has been hosted in previous years), then an Event Office could "green light" an event, granting them permission to proceed prior to being issued their final permit.

These are just a few examples of how you can reduce processing bottlenecks, open up the lines of communication with all of your stakeholders, and improve how you interact with and serve event organizers.

If you work in an Event Office and would like to share how you've improved customer service, I'd love to hear from you. Join the conversation on Twitter by using the hashtag, #eventpermit

In the next issue of "ie" Magazine, I'll discuss ways your Event Office can address Council priorities..

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