

ACTUALLY IMPLEMENTING THAT STRATEGIC PLAN YOU'VE WRITTEN

The Kentucky Derby Festival spent most of 2017 writing a strategic plan with the goal of actually using it! As I wrote in the fall 2017 edition of i.e. magazine, the process fleshed out three pillars on which our organization would focus:

- Enhance the volunteer program
- Broaden the revenue base
- Orient the organization on collecting, utilizing, and reporting more actionable data

Working through a process of a SWOT analysis, forced rankings and engaged group discussion our strategic planning committee settled on these three topics. It was a very productive exercise and allowed for an introspective look at the health of our organization. But it was only half the battle. Once the presentation to the board was concluded and the committee disbanded, the hard work of actually implementing the plan had to take hold. It meant ensuring the entire hierarchy of KDF was committed to the principles of the plan. From the President & CEO to the members of the event committees, everyone needed to have a stake in making sure we focused on these core objectives. We have found that the beauty of the plan is its simplicity. By focusing on only three areas, we have allowed our team the ability to develop their own ideas and run with them! Below is an example of how the Volunteer Committee met and discussed the plan and decided on a course of action moving forward. It's a good example of how a committee came together to brainstorm and make decisions based on the overall directive.

Strategy: Enhance the Volunteer Program

What: KDF Needs a Strong Pool of Volunteers to Produce our Events.

We have an opportunity to enhance the over-all program and grow our volunteer base so that we can continue to support current and future events. There are three key actions that we need to take in order to grow our volunteer base:

- Recruit the next generation of volunteers
- Continue to build upon our robust volunteer pipeline
- Understand why we have had a hard time attracting committed volunteers.

Why: Volunteers are a Huge and Valuable Resource for the Festival

- Volunteer hours translate to a large financial resource for KDF estimated at a value of over \$750,000 each year
- KDF has a tenured volunteer base of individuals with high retention however, the base is aging and we need to attract new volunteers and engage the younger generation
- We struggle with getting volunteers for some of our events.

How: Expand Advertising for Volunteer Program

- Develop a social media plan to recruit and engage a younger demographic
- Develop a digital media plan to recruit and engage a younger demographic
- Advertise/recruit volunteers for upcoming year during current year events (e.g. put up signs near the exits, put flyers in packets, etc.)
- Distribute goodie bags with sunscreen, snacks, and other "essential" items for volunteering.

Develop a Year-Round Volunteer Recruitment Program

- Create an Ambassador Program to recruit new volunteers similar to the Marathon/miniMarathon Ambassador Program
- Go on a speaking circuit and go to organizations and corporate volunteer coordinators throughout the year
 - Engage a team of Board members
 - Share specific volunteer needs
- Include a volunteer recruitment piece in any KDF relevant speaking engagement
- Continue to attend Volunteer Fairs and seek out new Volunteer Fairs (have attended Bellarmine and University of Louisville).

Our goal is to have every person who has a vested interest in the Festival think through and analyze how the strategic plan can be applied in their given area of work. It must permeate the culture of the organization. Every event committee meeting, staff meeting, executive board meeting should include an update on these three items:

- What are you doing to recruit more volunteers?
- How are the sponsors doing? Are there ways to produce more non-sponsorship income?
- How can we collect usable data?

We've found it's not a difficult thing to do! Especially since we've limited the scope of the plan to three key areas. It's more about making these issues top of mind so that they are discussed and brainstormed. We're not asking for specific boxes to be checked, but rather empowering each event committee and individual to think things through and be creative!

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