



TURNSTILES MARKETING FOR EVENT MANAGERS

CREATIVE PLACEMAKING TO TIE YOUR EVENT TO THE

CULTURAL LIFE

In the last issue of i.e. Magazine, we gave you a few new concepts describing the work we all do in bringing events and festivals to life to celebrate our communities, embrace our diversity and improve the overall quality of life in the regions we call home.

As originally defined by Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa Nicodemus, authors of a white paper commissioned by the Mayor's Institute on City Design entitled *Creative Placemaking*, creative placemaking is the field of practice that intentionally leverages the power of arts, culture and creativity to serve a community's interest while driving a broader agenda for change, growth and transformation in a way that also builds character and quality of place.

There is a lot to unpack within a single statement. It may be best for our purposes to understand creative placemaking as the all-encompassing phrase that allows us to define the efforts behind the work we do when hosting multi-day festivals or small neighborhood events and how that work plays a role along with the physical and natural features of our city, town or region.

In essence, the events and festivals we organize, plan and manage result in the overall improvement of the quality of life in our communities. Government officials and business leaders are eagerly searching for the magic potion to impact the neighborhoods they represent in positive ways. For us in the festivals and event industry, creative placemaking gives

us a new overarching definition to examine our work and our approach to improving the quality of life in our cities and regions that also affect the health and wellness, education and overall spirit of individuals and families where we live, work and play.

Social Capital

Social capital is another byproduct of our work in the event and festival sector. Defined as the networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively. It is more easily understood that social capital is the glue that holds a community together.

Cities and regions are under incredible pressure to address the basic needs of the population through law enforcement, healthcare, education, transportation, infrastructure and too many other issues to list. At some level, we need to acknowledge that the arts, culture, food and history are part of our human nature and the tapestry we weave.

Culture is what defines us.

Whether it is an afternoon ethnic street fair, a weekend-long music and food festival or a 10-day county fair, the need for celebrating our accomplishments, to enjoy one another's company and engage with the community holistically, is where the greatest return on investment for our work is realized.

Creative placemaking lives in many different formats, but the one underlying

fact is the work and the plan is intentional. From long standing successes such as San Antonio's Riverwalk to Providence's WaterFire and too many others to include, creative placemaking allows public-private partnerships to address some of the social needs of the citizens and creates opportunities for tourism and brand building for your city or region, with most all beginning with a single idea.

Imagine if you took your current festival and turned it into a series of events with the eventual plan of having a permanent physical venue or location. Communities across America have done so, reclaiming underutilized brownspaces to become hubs of innovation and artistic activity. Look no further than ArtQuest in Bethlehem, PA, which grew from a week-long Musikfest Festival into a 365 days per year arts campus with visual arts, concerts, movies, festivals and creating the economic engine that has driven the rebirth of a rust-belt city into a thriving community.

We're not saying this is possible in every location, as the pressures of homelessness, poverty, crime, food insecurity continue to mount in most every city. However, without the investment into the arts and culture as manifested by our events and festivals, we lose the ability for residents and guests to connect with one another and benefit from the positive outcomes that are associated with the creating and reinforcing of social capital

OF YOUR REGION

with intention. Otherwise, cities stand as a bunch of buildings where people work but return quickly to their homes with no opportunity to build on all of the investment made in those urban communities.

The Creative Economy

Working hand-in-hand with creative placemaking is the creative economy sector.

The creative economy is defined by jobs in design, architecture, advertising, marketing, publishing, IT and software as well as those employees in all elements of the arts, culture and entertainment industry.

The creative economy is most easily understood by two conditions: where you work and what you do. If you work for any of the organizations in the aforementioned industries, then you count among the creative class. However, if your role in any company in any sector includes activities such as design, marketing, IT, etc., then you too are considered as a member of this growing and prosperous sector in today's economy.

Social entrepreneurs and creative types of all sorts are also counted among this new and burgeoning group of job creators. The internet has made it possible for anyone with a smart phone and internet connection to become a creator. Billions of dollars are now being earned on the most popular web platforms such as YouTube, Etsy, eBay, Instagram and others by leveraging social connections across

the country and around the world and sharing creative content of all genres with those who wish to engage.

So why is the creative economy important to event and festival organizers and promoters?

The creative economy will continue to drive the investment in job creation over the next few decades and as we've seen by recent corporate expansion by Amazon, Apple and others, quality of life is key to these employers in recruiting and retaining the talent that is the lifeblood of their industries. And remember, these same quality of life issues are as important to your partners such as the regional bank, car dealer, university, health care system as they are to the Fortune 100.

One needs to look no further than the arts and culture scene, as well as the number of events and festivals in an area to understand the importance and dedication to the quality of life. Employers need to look towards your event or festival as an opportunity to improve upon that quality of life and develop partnerships with the same regard as they invest in a new product launch or a brand building expenditure.

Your event and festival allows for current and future sponsors to show their support for the community through their investment. An increase in the number of events and the improved quality of those festivals succeed in creating the social capital every community needs. Simultaneously,

these events tell the story of why your neighborhood, your community and your region is so unique and special to those who live there and those who come to visit.

Think Big

The key takeaway is to understand the importance of how the economy is changing to incorporate a new landscape of creativity on and offline. As one of the main proprietors of the culture in your community, you have many new avenues as how to position your event as a way to connect the community to business and government in meaningful ways that improves everyone's quality of life.

If you don't embrace these opportunities, you are missing an opportunity to reach new audiences, create new revenue streams and work towards the goal of sustainability for your organization and events to grow long into the future.

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