

THE BOARD



New Technologies and Non-Traditional Urban Planning at Festivals & Events

I recently experienced a spectacular performance of robotic exo-skeletons worn by spectators attending a production called *Inferno*, presented as part of *Elektra*, a modern art festival featured in Montreal.

Two months ago, I submitted a project to our City planning services, to create a 24 shipping containers artistic installation in our downtown core as the site for a series of performing arts events for the entire summer. This aesthetic modern installation will require the removal of about 60 parking spots and will become one of the public programming hubs for Canada's 150th Celebration in the Nation's Capital. Such a project will serve as a pilot program while City Urban Planners explore different avenues to rejuvenate the area.

For over three years', beacons have been used by a variety of festivals in connection with experience enhancement apps to push customized messaging and opportunities to consumers.

These three examples are just a few examples of how new technologies and non-traditional urban planning models demonstrate are often part of our events and festivals. Not only are such initiatives allowing our events to evolve and remain current, but they are also permitting us to differentiate our offerings from competitors. Continuous innovation

mechanisms can facilitate securing alliances with key local stakeholders and innovators as well as demonstrating your value added to city officials and decision makers. By their very nature, events are expected to be incubators of innovation. Their ephemeral status allows them to be large scale laboratories for social policies, urban design and technological applications. But too often, festival management strictly focuses on how to duplicate the standard model developed by similar entities in other markets and therefore miss the opportunity of creating unique programs building on their city's unique assets.

By fostering such innovation, by opening up to non-traditional alliances and by pushing for continuous changes, not only will you be able to maintain leadership position in the market place and ensure the sustainability of your event, but you will also nurture a win-win relationship with city officials and community leaders.

Events can be one of the research and development arms of a city or community as they can not only test

new approaches, but they can also be a catalyst to stimulate the imagination and the vision of local leaders and residents. Events should be considered an essential element of any smart city or as a way to reach such status.

Applying proper planning processes, conducting external macro and micro environmental analysis and doing a full review of your internal capacity and unique assets are not just for global organizations, it is a must if you want to remain current. Investing in consultation with traditional and non-traditional stakeholders is the very best fuel for innovation and to generate profitable research and development opportunities.

GUY LAFLAMME

2016 IFEA World Board Chair
Executive Director, Ottawa 2017
Professor, Telfer School of
Management, University of
Ottawa ON, Canada