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Higher Education Event – A Case Study and Special Event Approach

by

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PART ONE

Introduction

Event management education has emerged as a formal area of study within the hospitality industry; one important and significant subset of hospitality education is meetings, events, conventions, and expositions. For many years, competent individuals created and developed events for clients, customers, company leaders, and staff. These individuals relied on their various backgrounds and experiences to produce meetings or special events (Goldblatt, 2002). As the event management profession grows through education, future professionals and educators can use this paper to link writings of nonprofit special events, university conferences and events, and professional event coordination found in the field of hospitality management. A thorough examination of these writings will generate new knowledge that professional organizations and associations demand. The following paper will examine the literature in the field of hospitality and its relationship to event management, giving specific attention to higher education events that need to start, continue, and increase successful fundraising programs (Wendroff, 2004). Fundraising programs in higher education use events to engage various constituencies to achieve success and the evolving discipline of event management can help support this developing movement. Three broad trends are discussed: adaptation of university conference and event standards; shifting focus of university foundation special events; and the identification of strategic niche markets that can lead to greater event success.

Purpose

The purpose of the present paper is to gain a better understanding of hospitality management literature in order to improve higher education event management strategies. The

resulting professional paper intends to bring forward relevant literature and practical trends in event management. In addition, the paper intends to take a useful approach in examining the role of university conference and event standards in coordinating successful university development events. Moreover, this review expects to identify trends in higher education event programs as they relate to the hospitality industry. Events are important development initiatives and when properly planned can become a true cultivation activity (Grace, 2008). Finally, this paper serves as the impetus for a change of procedure (ex post facto) within the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Foundation.

Problem statement

Continuous economic uncertainty for funding from state governments and private donors lead the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Foundation to examine its event activities, specifically, the area of event coordination and its direct relationship to the mission of seeking private support for the university. Competition amongst higher education foundations and other nonprofit organizations dictates a proactive approach to organizational strategies as university benefactors or donors expect greater accountability and unique opportunities for involvement.

Statement of Objective

Main objective of this paper addresses the need for higher education foundations to produce more efficient, higher quality, and potentially profitable events (Wendroff, 2004). This ex post facto study closely examines the process used by the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Foundation to solve organizational problems related to addressing uncertain funding, competition, and applying new knowledge. This review improved the foundation's focus by adopting relevant event management strategies and exploring individual strengths through

service to niche markets. In addition, this review helped draw together the event professional and development team to create special events focused on connecting the university mission's with popular events (Grace, 2008).

Justification

Traditionally, nonprofits host special events with the help of volunteers to raise money for a specific cause or project (Levy & Marion, 1997). Today, not-for-profit organizations compete for the attention and involvement of the broader community. Higher education foundations are not immune to this competition. Furthermore, donor expectations and accountability (Barton, Bermudez, DiMento, Howard & Kean, 2007) have driven university foundations to examine the way they conduct their business. In particular, events are designed to enhance and engage benefactors through specific projects to help ensure that they become loyal supporters (Hall, 2006). Klein (2001) noted that the two most important facts about fundraising are that the bulk of money given to nonprofits comes from individuals and the majority of people who give are not rich. Klein continues, "This is of particular interest to higher education foundations and public universities and their vast number of alumni" (Klein, 2001, p. 1).

Higher education foundations build broad bases of individual donors who support the institute to allow the university to pursue their mission (Lenkowsky, 2007). While public universities have always been central to a community's source for higher education, the reality today is that federal grants and state support have not kept pace with enrollments (Arenson, 2008). The costs associated to operating a university continue to grow while proportion of and ability of local, state, and federal government to fund public education has decreased. Over this period, the vital role of university foundations has emerged as private support becomes

increasingly essential to provide the minimum resources for operation (Wendroff, 2004). The topic of university foundation events is important to the hospitality industry because it builds upon existing writings in event management. University foundations use events as a means to cultivate donors, keep with the mission of the organization and convey messages that state the university purpose (Levy & Marion, 1997). This is keeping with goals of providing strategic events designed to help the university reach its goals.

The following literature review links together hospitality event management, nonprofit special event and higher education event writings. University foundations use events to cultivate benefactors to create loyalty with the university. Single large fundraising events were considered vital to engage volunteers and generate private support. The emerging field of event management and event professional continues to define industry standards to guide future event planning. The following writings come from three different areas but have common elements when planning an event. Finally, the paper will present an analysis of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Foundation Suite Deal event. Special attention is given to the event description, the marketing plan, management plan with corresponding timeline and financial plan. Primary areas of focus include a change of procedure and strategy to enlist assistance from volunteers to invite potential new university contributors.

Constraints

There are possible limitations of note on this paper. The graduate student researching this project is a university foundation employee. In addition, bias may develop during the post fact review due to the intimate nature of the employee with the organization. Additionally, the

graduate student and the university under study are situated in one of the most well known hospitality and resort communities in the world.

PART TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

Special events are unique fundraising programs that strengthen nonprofits' image in the community, and recruit and involve volunteers to raise money, as well as friends (Rosso, 1991). Challenging this concept is the reality of limited agency resources and intense competition for private contributions. Nonprofit organizations are looking for sustainable gift revenue in an intense competitive market (Wendroff, 2004). David Leonhardt reports that a Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University report found that Americans gave \$295 billion to charity in 2006, equal to 2.2 percent of the country's gross domestic product. Elizabeth Schwin (2008) reports that 62 percent of the public thinks charities spend too much money on overhead costs such as fundraising and administration. Beliefs such as this can make it harder for charities to raise money. People's attitudes influence their giving and new charities that are viewed as non-efficient are less likely to receive donations (Hall, 2006). A new report by the Council of Aid to Education states that in 2007, universities raised \$30 billion from private supporters (Arenson, 2008). This has created the discussion that universities are turning into fundraising machines and public universities are jumping into the race for gifts and seeking to build endowments. The importance of higher education foundation fundraising is based on the need to establish, maintain, and expand a successful community based fundraising program (Wendroff, 2004). Public university foundations build broad bases of individual donors and allow the universities to pursue their mission (Lenkowsky, 2007). The competition is driving higher education foundations to reexamine their traditional fundraising strategies. David Leonhardt (2008) reports

that fundraisers continue to seek guidance in developing a unified theory of how to raise money. At a recent Princeton University conference, those who study charitable giving gathered and discovered that fundraisers and charitable organizations use different strategies to reach out to potential donors. Leonhardt (2008) quotes Nicole Eley of Aficare saying, “Many of them (strategies) work, some don’t, it’s a trial and error process.” A single, large special event has long been the cornerstone to the fundraising efforts of many university and college foundations (Wendroff, 2004). However, the unique relationships with targeted audiences and increased competition have created the need to evaluate higher education foundation special event strategies.

Definition and Purpose of Events

Getz defines a special event as “an opportunity for leisure, social or cultural experiences outside the normal range of choices or beyond experience” (Berridge, 2007, p. 5). Goldblatt (2005) describes an event as a “unique moment in time celebrated with ceremony and ritual to satisfy specific needs” (p.6). He expands on this definition by explaining that there are four purposes behind hosting an event: to celebrate human life; to educate; to market, and create awareness and to reunite people (Goldblatt, 2005, pp. 8-9). Event professionals lead and guide the planning process that includes the ceremony and ritual aspects along with key factors defined by Goldblatt (2005) as the “design, planning, management, and coordination of special events” (p.6). Additionally, an event professional that has an understanding of the audience for the event can shape specific strategies and tactics that will bridge these traditional elements with the needs of the institution.

Kilkenny (2006) identified nine common event elements that event management companies consider when providing services.

1. Vision: The main reason and focus for having the event.
2. Goals and Objectives: Every event will have goals and objectives. Larger events might have multiple goals and objectives with all needing to be discussed, defined, set and confirmed.
3. Site Selection: Location is an essential element of an event's success whether it ranges from an intimate venue to an arena.
4. Promotion: The message must be disseminated. It could be as simple as an invitation or as complicated as the material required for a weeklong convention with numerous workshops, special events, outside excursions, banquets and required registration information.
5. Participants/Attendees: Without them, there would not be an event. They may be invited guests, paying participants or individuals required to attend.
6. Agenda: A detailed outline with times of all activities is required. It logs what is happening from hours before the participant's arrival to the

follow-up when the event is complete. There are two types of agendas:

one for the participants and one for the people who work behind the scenes of the event.

7. Food and Beverage: Essential for every event's success is the appropriateness and quality of the food and beverages whether it is water and mints for a short seminar or a sit-down dinner for 10,000 guest.
8. Transportation: The requirements can range from transporting 800 people to and from 10 hotels to the meeting site, or simply getting the planner to the event. It may involve travel needs for entertainment, speakers, and VIPs along with airfare and rental cars.
9. Staffing: Each event has its own requirements for staffing from volunteers, caterers, musicians, florist, clean-up crew, valets, ticket takers, emcees, speakers, or a balloon clown.

The responsibility of an event manager is to “create the conditions in which these events will occur under the client’s event budget guidelines” (Allen, 2002, p. 4). It is about “the creation of a step-by-step program to get you from where you are to where you want to be” (Harris, 2007, p. 9). High probability of success can be attributed to “meticulous preparation, a pursuit of flawless execution, and an ability to respond as a cohesive team when the unexpected inevitability surfaces” (Wolf & Wolf, 2005, p. 3). In 2007, Cunningham addressed the

fundamentals that breed successful events, saying, “Whatever the sizes of an event, the same principles apply. There must be meticulous planning and careful management” (2007, para. 4). Silvers (2004) characterizes the successful process managers use to develop and deliver the desired event experience regardless of scope.

1. Conduct the necessary research to determine expectations and create a customer profile of the event attendees or participants.
2. Conceptualize the event, assessing the scope of the event required to meet expectations.
3. Determine which event elements and components will provide the features of the desired experience.
4. Visualize how all these event components will and must fit together, and design the strategy for implementation.
5. Finally, monitor the delivery of the experience. (p. 4).

Event Management Essential Elements

Event management writings have adopted the essential elements of establishing *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how* from the journalism profession. Event management considers these working fundamentals as event elements (Silvers, 2004; Turner, 2004; Wolf & Wolf, 2005). Also in 2005, Wolf and Wolf state that the “5 W’s” and the *how* must be considered from the point of conceptualization, throughout the event, to its conclusion.

The event element *who* encompasses the examination of the guests and the creation of a customer profile (Silvers, 2004). The necessary part of “knowing who your guests are plays a part in how you will design your event” (Wolf & Wolf, 2005, p. 4). Kilkenny (2006) asserts, “Identifying and reaching the right people or group is crucial. It is about identifying those groups who will want to come to your event. It is about identifying those whom you want to come to your event!” (p. 45). After identifying the right groups, it is vital to develop “a customer profile for each consistency you will need to serve, including demographics, lifestyle and life stage, purchase stimulus, and benefits sought. The profile of each of these customer groups will reveal needs and desires that should be factored into the event analysis and plan” (Silvers, 2004, p. 30).

The event element *what* component helps define the type of event by considering the target audience and examining their needs (Allen, 2000). The end result may identify three common types of events; (a) social, including weddings, showers, birthday parties, and bar and bat mitzvahs; (b) corporate, which can range from board meeting to a large convention with after-hour entertainment, transportation and lodging; and (c) fund-raising, which provides a unique set of requirements where the event needs to be enjoyable and entertaining, but will not cause the participants to believe that money is being spent too lavishly and unwisely (Wolf & Wolf, 2005). Consequently, the event type defines the structure for planning and design.

The event element *when* includes not only the specifics of the date and season of the year, but also the details of time of day and length of the affair (Wolf & Wolf, 2005). Freedman and Freedman (2007) emphasize the timing of the event as essential to its success. “A group can produce the best event of the social season, fashion it to the exact tastes of the target audience,

and have lots of money and people to pull it off, but still fail if it isn't properly scheduled" (p. 31).

The event element *where* focuses on the location. The site is intimately related to the event style with its selection being "both a science and an art – part investigation and part intuition" (Silvers, 2004, p. 65). Allen (2000), states that the location decision "can make or break your event" he goes on to say that, location sets the overall tone and is communicated to the guests (p. 37). Furthermore, the site sets many of the parameters of the event such as the number of guests, the style of décor, other required amenities (i.e. power, restrooms, wheelchair access, etc.), and important budget considerations (Turner, 2004).

The event element *why* or the event purpose needs to be clearly defined before planning can begin. Goals and objectives of large or small events clearly articulate the ultimate vision (Kilkenny, 2006). Silvers (2004) states that with the help of the event manager, the goals and objectives are outlined with each being specific, measureable, assignable, realistic and time-related.

Wendroff (2004) presented the seven goals for a successful special event:

1. Raise money: Part nondeductible fee for a tangible item (e.g., food, auction bids, and green fees) and part pure gift to the nonprofit.
2. Update the mission statement to educate your constituency: Mission statement is interpreted and translated from words in the nonprofit's annual report to concrete examples of the organization's work in the community.

3. Motivate board members and major givers: Requirement of board members is to fundraise and selling tickets is an excellent way to train reluctant volunteers. Supporting “their” nonprofit is easier with the interaction of peers.
4. Recruit volunteers and future board members: Volunteers are the fuel that drives the engine of all nonprofit programs; recruitment can expand the quantity and quality of the pool of volunteers.
5. Market the organization: Bring together prospects, current and past supporters, and people who are new to the special world of philanthropy. Allows these people to see firsthand the work of the agency, by letting them observe situation where the agency is shown to its best advantage.
6. Solicit endorsements: Prominent community citizen or celebrity receiving an award from the agency.

The event element *how* can be determined when the “5 Ws” are answered. However, they are all subject to the budget and its restriction. “A well-created and maintained budget is an essential tool to allow you to project and supervise income and expenses, track cash flow and verify how well you are doing at any given point” (Kilkenny, 2006, p. 61). Incorporated in the event element *how* are the numerous services and techniques essential to make an event a success. Every event is distinctive and has its own necessities. Nevertheless, the most

dependably used techniques for insuring event success are the thorough implementation of a timeline and production schedule. Timelines “serve as important planning tools in nearly every step in the process” (Kilkenny, 2006, p. 26). Event managers outline every step of the event, from the months prior to the actual event to its actual implementation and evaluation. The timeline serves as the flowchart illustrating not only the series of events, but also how the many elements will interact (Silvers, 2004). A production schedule “is a detailed list of task with specific start and stop times from setup through load-out of an event” (Goldblatt, 2005, p. 204). Collectively they form what Goldblatt describes as a time-line production schedule.

The special characteristics of fundraising events are that multidimensional goals can result from designing and implementing a strategy that affects all of the guests who attend the event. The personal contact that a special event can offer is in contrast to the usual fundraising strategy of direct mail or telethon programs (Wendroff, 2004, p. 3). University foundations have to balance the need for fundraising and the need to develop the individual relationship. The idea of an event usually is born from the need for funds (money). Raising money through events can be done any number of ways, such as through a baked goods sale, car wash, an annual gala, or the placement of a collection canister. There are also many approaches to raise private funds for one-time needs. However, events can provide an opportunity to do much more for an organization (Levy & Marion, 1997). A special event brings to life the nonprofit’s mission through the inclusion of volunteers, lay leaders, and the nonprofit supporters in a social gathering that entertains and educates people regarding the work of the nonprofit in the community (Wendroff, 2004).

Fundraising

The primary function of a foundation is to generate gift revenue to support the organization's enterprise. The principles of fundraising seem simple: to raise money (Wendroff, 2004). However, a closer examination by Klein identified the importance of individual donors who feel very loyal to an organization (Klein, 2001). Klein concluded that the "purpose of fundraising is to build relationships or raise donors not simple to raise money" (p. 1). The concept of relationship building directly correlates to university foundations and the institution's alumni. Universities are uniquely positioned to create long-lasting relationships with their current students and future graduates. Strategic focus on a broad donor base means that sometimes universities will undertake a fundraising strategy that does not raise money. Direct mail and planned giving techniques allow an institution to relate to donors as individuals and not anonymous ATM machines performing a simple transaction. Thus, any fundraising strategy is both a short and long-term proposition.

Cultivation

Cultivation is "the process of bringing people closer to your organization by raising their level of interest, information, and involvement" (Marion & Levy, 1997, p. 14). University foundations that develop event strategies around constituency preferences create highly personal events. Marion (1997) continues to discuss the importance of volunteers and their long-term relationship with organizations. When board members invite a guest to an event, it is "person to person" (p. 14). This approach expands a personal relationship between the invitee and the organization.

CAS Conference and Event Program Standards

“A higher education campus is a community where people gather to learn, share, and discuss issues of interest (CAS Standards Contextual Statement, 2006, p. 20). Furthermore, campuses are centers for symposia, lectures, public events, demonstrations, conferences, and other short duration teaching and learning programs. Campus programs market and attract diverse audiences, from different generations, occupations, and education levels. Events help to identify the campus as a place where spirited scholarly, cultural, social, artistic, athletic, and other activities freely occur. At the center of this important educational duty is an administrative department accountable for developing, coordinating, and promoting on and off campus conferences and events. Event and conference programs take up a broad range of organizational, hosting, and logistical services. The range of services provided to diverse constituents includes:

1. Program planning
2. Managing conference centers
3. Developing conferences in conjunction with faculty and staff members
4. Providing services and support for summer youth camps
5. Coordinating guest services and special celebrations
6. Scheduling facilities
7. Organizing donor events: inaugurations, groundbreakings, commencements, homecoming, parent weekend, and other traditional gatherings (p. 28)

Conference and event programs enhance diverse campus cultures, and support institutional efforts to function as a center for celebrations and non-traditional educational activities. Furthermore, they provide venues for free-speech, a forum for cultural events, exposed research findings to students and scholars, and a chance for more people to observe what higher education is all about (p. 28).

Campus Conference and Event Professional Associations

The multifaceted boost of public universities has demanded conference and event service standards. Several associations for campus and event professionals emerged in the mid 1990's born from a study of service practices. The Canadian University and College Conference Officers Association (CUCCOA) first called for establishing international standards for event practitioners. In 1997, the Association of Collegiate Conference and Events Directors International (ACCED-I), CUCCOA, the Association of College and University Housing Officers-International (ACUHO-I), and the British Universities Accommodation Consortium (BUAC), now named VENUEMASTERS, collectively agreed on the need for professional standards in collaboration with the CAS standards development initiative. (p. 29).

Conclusion to Literature Review

The event management discipline continues to expand and engulfs more interdisciplinary areas of education. The art and science of events integrates applications from business, management, art, psychology, and sociology, and as the discipline evolves, it will add to scientific examination.

PART THREE

Methodology and Special Event Plan

The purpose of this case study is to test a special event plan to guide the planning process for university foundation events. The guideline was developed based University of Nevada, Las Vegas Foundation event held on January 23, 2008, at the Thomas & Mack Center. A strategy emerged from an adaptation of goals for a successful special event outlined by Wendroff (2004). Outlined below is the strategic plan developed at the start of the project.

Part 1: Description of project and goals

The goal of this project is to design a special event to help the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) Foundation development program, which was formed in 1981. In the last quarter century, UNLV's alumni, friends, corporate partners, and employees have given nearly \$800 million in gifts and pledges for students, faculty, research, buildings, and programs. The UNLV development effort foster relationships with alumni, friends, corporations, and foundations to encourage their private financial support for all students, faculty, research, and innovative programs that distinguish UNLV as an exceptional university. Undesignated support, referred to as annual fund dollars, is one of the most important fund-raising priorities for the university. They allow UNLV to act quickly to address campus needs, take advantage of special opportunities, and support administrative costs related to raising private funds for the university (UNLV Foundation, 2008).

The annual fund comprises thousands of individual unrestricted gifts that are used to support UNLV's primary missions of teaching, research, and service. In part, these funds are raised through membership in three leadership gift societies: the President's Associates, the

President's Inner Circle, and the Academic Corporate Council. Gifts to the annual fund help to recruit top faculty, create programs, and provide the tools for serious educational work. The annual fund supports scholarship programs and internship opportunities, and it enhances the intellectual life of the campus by underwriting lectures, presentations, forums, and concerts. With decreasing funding from government entities and rising cost of education, the need for private resources is more important than ever. Annual fund gifts are among the most important and valuable to UNLV because they meet unexpected challenges, take advantage of unusual opportunities, support administrative costs related to raising private funds, and meet the many day-to-day challenges of modern higher education. In support of their association as donors to the university, benefactors to the annual fund receive special invitations to various events, social gatherings, and functions. Annual fund donors comprise over 300 individual and business benefactors. Overwhelmingly the vast amount of support comes from individuals and this group provides nearly \$1.3 million to support UNLV's initiatives. By far this is the single largest unrestricted resource available to UNLV (UNLV Foundation, 2008).

In 2008, in recognition of their annual contribution of \$ 1,000 and more, benefactors receive an invitation to the "Suite Deal," including a pre-game hosted reception, two seats at the game, and full catering in a luxury suite in the Thomas & Mack Center. The event was on January 23, and featured the Runnin' Rebel basketball team competing against Mountain West Conference opponent the University of Wyoming.

A volunteer cadre called the Annual Giving Council actively assists UNLV Foundation staff in goal setting, recruitment and retention of gift club members, conducting cultivation and solicitation calls on behalf of the university, attending key events, and reporting progress to the

overall foundation board. The Annual Giving Council is an important entity in the development of prospects for the annual fund and annual giving programs and requires conscientious support and frequent contact. The relationships renewed and created will help the foundation continue its primary function to raise private support on behalf of UNLV (UNLV Foundation, 2008).

Part 2: Marketing Plan

The target audience for the event included current annual fund donors, key volunteers, and university and foundation leadership who contribute more than \$ 1,000 each year. One objective of the event was to have 125 individuals in attendance. In order to secure, this number of people, printed pieces including save the date cards and invitations were sent out to the invitees. A personal telephone campaign directed by volunteers and foundation staff members complimented and served as a follow up to the printed collateral. All materials and direct contact informed the invitee of the online registration option located at <http://foundation.unlv.edu/rsvpsd.html>.

Part 3: Event Plan & Timeline

An initial meeting to discuss the event vision determined the level of budget support needed to achieve stated goals and objectives. These decisions were made based on historical information and budget analysis of the 2007 event. The review determined that additional funding was necessary to produce a successful event. Secured funding is necessary to support this event idea and staff attempted to secure a sponsorship from a local bank. Sheldon (2000) states that industry leader's act responsible by identifying organizations they associate with and provide a mix of support. The president of Colonial Bank and several board members have had a long relationship with UNLV; the bank also has a cause-related marketing initiative to connect it

with the company's public relations department initiatives. Using this cause-related marketing strategy, all the Thomas & Mack suite owners were contacted through several communication vehicles. Upon identifying the date of the event, the suite owner primary contacts were sent an introductory e-mail. This e-mail defined the case for support and need of the organization. Next, a formal communication or letter was sent to the company president or CEO asking for permission to use the company suite, as well as full underwriting of the catering and event tickets to support the university and foundation mission. Finally, a follow-up call was made to the company representative who will manage the request. This strategic alliance provided the necessary funding to proceed with the implementation of the event timeline. These important activities were part of the overall timeline, but more importantly identified the funding sources required to achieve the stated event goals.

In order to support the stated event goal a direct relationship developed with the UNLV athletics department to create a special or unique opportunity. In particular, the basketball program because of the opportunity to capitalize on a highly visible organization in the community. In addition, the special opportunity to sit in a corporate suite with catering and beverages to enjoy during the game was unique. An invitation was created and sent to 325 members of the annual fund program. The intention of the pre-game reception was to highlight the corporate sponsor and to provide an opportunity to promote the importance of giving to the university. Environment design consisted of university colors and mascot photo opportunity to project a collegial theme. Catering and beverage options consisted of a nacho bar, beer, wine, water and soda. A conscious decision was made early on not to provide hard liquor because of the related liability and cost issues.

A series of task and important steps necessary to produce a successful event were activated. Development of collateral material, invitation, table tents highlighting the sponsors, and recognition boards that listed members of the annual fund program were created to display in the reception room. The invitation included to inform the invitee as to who, what, where, when, and why this event took place.

Change of procedure or strategy developed during the planning process. Additional suites owners agreed to participate resulting in more space for guest. Expected responses from current donors were already factored in to the attendance goals, but this opportunity allowed staff to directly involve volunteers and create a cultivation experience for potential new contributors. A strategy developed to provide one suite per volunteer to invite prospects and to host that suite for the duration of the game. This strategy improved the personal contact from staff with volunteers.

Part 4: Financial Plan

Great importance was placed on the use of donor resources, so the financial plan developed required little private support. In fact, most of the funding came directly from the sponsorship agreement with Colonial Bank. The sponsor contributed \$ 7,500 to cover all costs associate with the event, including catering, print materials, décor enhancements and photo services. The individual suite owners were asked to cover the cost of catering, tickets and access to parking passes. On average, each suite owner provided \$500 worth of support. Additional efforts were made to secure donated beverage products to keep cost down.

Case Study Analysis of Part 1: Description of Project and Goals

The goal of engaging university benefactors remained a constant throughout the project. The planning, as discussed in the initial concept meeting, evolved continually but the vision of the event remained the same. Instead of focusing on benefactors that had no interest in attending a basketball game, attention was turned to volunteers and their social networks. Foundation volunteers who were interested in Rebel basketball invited guests to join them at the event. By serving as the host of a specific suite, volunteers were able to entice friends and colleagues that were interested in attending this event.

Analysis of Part 2: Marketing Plan

The marketing plan was successful in obtaining guests for the event. In addition, the increased number of suite owners donating their suite allowed the change of strategy to involve volunteers as hosts, providing greater representation from university and community leadership. Several suite owners hosted their own suites, including executives from Boyd Gaming, Stephens Media, and Las Vegas Events.

Analysis of Part 3: Event Plan & Timeline

The timeline created at the beginning was helpful in identifying important tasks and defined the roles for staff. The task list evolved during the planning process and helped identify the time-sensitive mailing issues and the increased number of seats available. This triggered the change in procedure from hosting current benefactors to engaging volunteers. As a working document, the management plan is ever changing and must capitalize on new opportunities. Many details such as suite seat assignments and directional signs are worked out before benefactors

arrive. Important logistics such as RSVP confirmation, guest name verification, parking, and guest count for catering created a well-organized event.

The event sponsor and university president delivered crafted messages. The presence of important corporate contributors and academic leader demonstrated to the audience that education is important in the community. More importantly, presentations carried the message that private support through the UNLV Foundation and its annual fund program supports the university mission.

The separation of tasks was carefully assigned, with continual communication between the event manager and the development staff. One master RSVP list was accessible for review by all involved staff members, but one department was assigned the primary responsibility for updates.

Analysis of Part 4: Financial Plan

The fundamental piece of the financial plan for all events is the budget, which in this case example, was developed through the program planning process. First, the event manager researched ideas to enhance an existing event and what financial implications to consider. From these considerations, the manager had an opportunity include or remove certain components, with consideration to expected contributions from strategic partners. During this process, the foundation also assessed the amount money the full event will cost, comparing it to previous donations and past event expenses to determine a realistic budget for the present event. Once the budget was approved and strategic partners are secured, it was important to create a payment schedule to ensure that all obligations were fulfilled and payments are made accordingly.

Overall, the event came in under budget, but a key decision to secure above projected cost from sponsors helped ensure the success of the event and the security of the budget cushion of the foundation. In final analysis, the event produced a net profit for the foundation, although there were areas that could have been monitored more effectively. For example, the initial in-kind product request from important vendors was confused with other university event activities. Additionally, new catering costs at the Thomas & Mack Center limited the food choices for the reception and individual suites.

Recommendations for Future research

This examination can be continued through the research of other university events. Each event is unique in its goal, plan, budget, and execution. However, many event elements remain constant and it is important to refine standards to develop a universal template for event managers. Continued analysis of each project is critical to eliminate repeated errors in design and execution.

Conclusions

Overall, this was an exceedingly successful project. Attendance surpassed initial 125-guest objective and resulted in an increase exposure of new groups to the UNLV Foundation and its fundraising programs. There were no major difficulties that influenced the opinion of the benefactors attending the event in a negative way. Most of the issues that arose were common when producing events; name changes, catering selection and budget adjustments. The staff involvement was fluid during the preparation and execution period.

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