

Event Marketing: How to
Successfully Promote Events,
Festivals, Conventions, and
Expositions (The Wiley Event
Management Series)

Leonard H. Hoyle



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HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY PROMOTE EVENTS, FESTIVALS, CONVENTIONS, AND EXPOSITIONS

Leonard H. Hoyle, CAE, CMP



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Event Marketing

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Leonard H. Hoyle, CAE, CMP



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Published simultaneously in Canada.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data:

Hoyle, Leonard H.

Event marketing : how to successfully promote events, festivals, conventions, and expositions / Leonard H. Hoyle.

p. cm. — (The Wiley event management series)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-471-40179-X (cloth : alk. paper)

1. Special events—Marketing. I. Title. II. Series.

GT3405.H69 2002

658.4'56—dc21

2001046819

Printed in the United States of America.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my wife Judy, whose infinite patience and understanding permitted me the time and sanctity to prepare this volume. Come to think of it, it has been her patience and understanding that has allowed me to be involved in the events industry for 35 years. I can never repay her for her love, support, and constant encouragement. But I can dedicate this book to her, and gratefully I do.

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Foreword

According to the management guru Peter Ferdinand Drucker, "Business has only two basic functions-marketing and innovation." Dr. Drucker understands that every business enterprise, whether not-for-profit or for-profit, must carefully research, design, plan, coordinate, and evaluate its marketing strategy to consistently achieve the goals of the enterprise.

Buck Hoyle also understands and in this pioneering book helps you to grasp and use the proven, successful principles of event marketing. Hoyle is the most qualified author to write this volume because he understands not only the theoretical underpinnings of this newly emerging discipline but also the practical requirements for promoting and selling events.

With over thirty years' professional experience in the event marketing field, Buck Hoyle has helped market meetings, conventions, conferences, expositions, and special events both large and small. He has served as chairman of the Convention Liaison Council (CLC), is a leader in the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE), and is a much sought after speaker for national associations in the event management industry, such as the Religious Conference Management Association.

Therefore, Mr. Hoyle is the leading expert in the field of event marketing, and this volume reflects his three decades of experience along with the best practices of dozens of other successful event management organizations.

The book includes many practical models that together form a system for event marketing that will ensure the future success of your events and make your recurring events even more profitable. Using the latest information regarding cyber event marketing (event e-commerce), he shows you how to easily and effectively use the latest technologies to reach your event's target market.

If your not-for-profit or for-profit enterprise occasionally or regularly brings people together for mutual benefit, this book provides the tools you will need to rapidly increase your success. As a result of this important new addition to the event management literature, Dr. Drucker's classic definition may now be expanded to combine marketing and innovation into one priceless opportunity. Event Marketing ensures that you can become the leading marketing innovator for your enterprise. As a result, you will soon redefine your own success in the event industry by using this valuable and important new tool.

Dr. Joe Goldblatt, CSEP

Series Editor, The Wiley Event Management Series

Dean & Professor, Johnson & Wales University

The Magic of Commitment

Without commitment there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness.

But in all acts of initiative and creation, there is one elementary truth, the absence of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans. And that is that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves too, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents, and meetings, and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would have come his way.

I have a deep respect for one of Goethe's couplets:

Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it!

-W. H. Murray (1840-1904)

Preface

Early in my career in association and convention management, an older, wiser colleague shared this philosophy of commitment with me in the quiet sanctity of my office late one evening. He quoted it to me out of hand and from memory. That was 33 years ago. I never forgot it.

When he finished speaking, I was so taken with and compelled by this wisdom, I asked my mentor to repeat it. As he did, I frantically scribbled it on a lined legal pad. I found myself not only trying to practice Mr. Murray's creative concepts in my work, but also found myself sharing his words about commitment and synergistic support with others in my writings, speeches, classroom lectures, and even casual conversations.

I had that same sheet of lined paper with the fading and blotched ink on my desk for years. In those moments of doubt in my work or my life, I would revisit it for inspiration. My superstitions forced me to keep the original wrinkled draft under my paperweight. I did copy it in the computer and in my calendar-just in case-but the old faithful inscription was there for me, on my desk, close at hand. It was folded, spindled, and mutilated from years of handling, but nonetheless was a foundation for my pursuits and my beliefs. For more than 30 years, I have treasured that late-evening conversation with my old friend, and what I learned from it. I still do.

Why? In event management, and particularly within the marketing discipline, all of the ingredients of success or failure are in those few sentences. Commitment to your goal is essential to full achievement. It generates excitement, creativity, and infectious enthusiasm. It draws others to your objectives, bringing to you new resources, people, and support that synergistically amplify your efforts. And this help will come from places you may not always anticipate. But, as an event manager and marketer, it must start with you.

To ensure success over the long term, reject the notion that things should always be done as they have been done before. You must dream what that event can be. Design it according to your vision. Describe your concepts to your friends and colleagues, supporters, and sponsors. Determine their levels of interest. And with those for whom you detect the highest levels of interest and support, learn to "ask for the order." This text will help you do that.

Be bold! Don't be afraid to dream and put those dreams into action. And feel the "genius, power, and magic" that your events will produce for others.

Build It, and They Will Come

In 1989, Universal City Studios released the motion picture *Field of Dreams*. Starring

Kevin Costner, Amy Madigan, James Earl Jones, Burt Lancaster, and Ray Liotta, the movie was a glowing tribute to all who dare to dream. For me, it revalidated W. H. Murray's philosophy of commitment and creativity, and I was struck by the film's mantra: "If you build it, they will come."

The foundation of the film is a baseball diamond carved out of a cornfield on a Dyersville, Iowa, farm some 20 miles from Dubuque. The ball field lures a myriad of people in the motion picture, all seeking to fulfill individual dreams in a most unlikely, hard-to-reach place. They do realize their dreams, in a hauntingly mystical and magical way.

What does this have to do with marketing?

First, the concept that "this is the place where dreams come true" has captured the imagination of literally millions of people. So much so that now, more than 12 years later, the actual movie site of the baseball field is still maintained by the original farmers in the middle of a cornfield, just as it was during the shooting of the film. The only alterations to this pristine site are the parking lots for the vans and buses that bring tourists, even today, from April to November and the concession stands that serve and sell to them.

Second, the people who to this day still find their way by the busload and carload to this "middle of nowhere" cornfield in central Iowa are active, not passive, participants. They are encouraged to take to the field, grab a ball and bat, and have a game of catch. Just like when you were a kid! Relive a dream of glory on the ball field. Meet some new people. Have some fun!

They are encouraged to wander into the cornfield, pick an ear of corn, dig up a little of the soil, and take it home to remember the experience. Make the experience memorable. That may be the most basic law of effective event management and marketing.

Third, the concept itself is original. It is something different. In the increasingly crowded field of special events and the growing challenges of marketing those events against growing competition, originality is critical to success. It is the unique experience that will become memorable for those who participate in it.

I had an old friend who wrote this "first commandment" to market his destination management and event production company in Mexico:

Thou Shalt Not Expect to Find Things as Thou Hast Them at Home, For Thou Hast Left Home to Find Them Different.

Owing to arrangements made by my wife who responded to the innovative marketing of, and my fascination with, the lure of that cornfield in Iowa, I was able to visit personally the "Field of Dreams" on a bitter-cold October day. I was drawn there by the original creative concept, the chance to do something that would be memorable

to me forever, and the idea of being an active participant with others. Despite fighting the frigid winds, we did have a game of catch with people we knew and others we had never met before.

It was so great! It filled my soul with the essence of human interaction, the capturing of common interests in even the most unlikely of places, among people who were previously strangers. It created personal bonds that have lasted for years. And that is the essence of the event industry.

I still have the ear of corn mounted on my office wall to prove I was there. I'll probably never get to go back. But in a way, I'll never leave.

What does this have to do with event marketing?

As examples: Today, the "Field of Dreams" not only attracts tourists by the busload, but also is the site for all-star baseball games, weddings, receptions, parties and various celebrations, reunions, and other special events. Their integrated marketing technique is employed throughout Iowa, including concentrated cooperative marketing with the Dubuque Convention and Visitors Bureau. And all of this happens in this unique venue, flanked only by a farmhouse, a corn silo, and a barn or two.

But I can give you a more personal example of the spirit of this special place. A few years after my visit to that cornfield in Iowa, I was involved in creating a totally new educational conference and exposition for a trade association I was managing. This effort would be a "leap of faith" that would likely decide the future of the organization, for good or for bad.

The new event would face severe competition from established associations running profitable, high-visibility conventions and expositions. The enterprise would require us to create an identity and name-brand recognition for our fledgling conference. It would necessitate the identification of new market segments and targetmarketing strategies. No success was guaranteed. Failure was a definite possibility. Still, we pursued our market analyses and financial projections.

If anything, our industry colleagues and competitors were chuckling at our folly. We were about to commit more than \$250,000 (all of our financial reserves) to the creation and marketing of a totally new event concept. And we were about to do that in the face of daunting and often unfriendly competition.

During my nights, sleep was elusive. I was doing much tossing and turning. Should we risk this? If it goes wrong, will I be held to blame? This was a defining moment for my association and for my career. And the answer came to me, believe it or not, one night in a fitful dream: "If you build it, they will come." The dream became crystal clear.

We could build the better mousetrap, the cutting-edge concept. We could design a more creative event that captures the imagination of our industry. We could take

advantage of the chance to provide a memorable experience for attendees. We could design innovative ways for people to participate actively, rather than passively. We could make it a profitable experience for all, in terms of both money and sociological/career-development motivations. All of the lessons were there. And if we do it right, we could put our association on the map in terms of legitimacy and in the black in terms of finances.

The strategy for the launching of this event, Affordable Meetings Conference and Exposition, sponsored by the Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International, required integrative marketing techniques, product design, and market research and segmentation.

This annual event has become an incredible success story and all because of the event marketing and management principles of producing events that are original, creative, participative, and memorable.

"I'd Love to Throw Parties for a Living"

Nikolaj Petrovic loves to tell this story. Now the president and CEO of the International Association for Document and Information Management Solutions, Nik's background is event management and marketing for association and corporate conferences as well as reunions, expositions, fundraisers, and other special events.

He was at a reception, talking casually with several new acquaintances. They were discussing their respective professions, and one guest said that he was a lawyer. Another said that he owned several franchises. Still another was the vice president of a bank. When asked what he did, Nik answered, "I'm a convention planner." After a pause, one of his new friends said, "Boy! I'd love to throw parties for a living!" He never forgot that exchange.

He also regrets he never had a chance to rebut the implications of that "throwing parties" comment, because he knew the demands and disciplines of his work, and they didn't. He knew that every day he had to have a working knowledge of:

- Group dynamics
- Marketing, promotion, and publicity
- Financial management and accounting
- Politics and leadership management
- Food and beverage management
- Law and liabilities
- Site inspection and selection

- Transportation
- Facilities management
- Housing and reservations
- Registration procedures
- Contracts and insurance
- Program participants' and speakers' liaison
- Logistics, function rooms, and meeting space
- Shipping and drayage
- Audiovisuals, teleconferencing, and electronic communications
- "Show flows" and scheduling
- Master accounts and gratuities
- Staging and decorations
- Exhibit management and marketing
- Program planning
- Evaluation and analysis techniques

And that's just a partial list of the body of knowledge required of the professional event manager.

Whether you are involved in marketing a major convention/exposition for 20,000 people or planning a wedding reception for 200, many, if not all, of these disciplines will be your responsibility. In other words, there is much more to it than "throwing parties for a living." No wonder my friend Nik was insulted-and speechless-as a result of this comment.

Marketing: The Integrative Management Tool

There is an old adage that "Nothing happens until somebody sells something"-an observation offered by Red Motley, the original editor of Parade magazine, the Sunday supplement to the Washington Post. Nowhere is this truer than in the conference and event industry. The marketing process must begin at the outset of the planning process, during the setting of the goals and objectives of the event itself. Marketing must both reflect and drive those objectives. It must also integrate the objectives into one goal

and enlist people into action toward the fulfillment of that goal.

For example, an educational conference essentially has one goal: to educate participants. The marketing approach should emphasize the unique educational programs that this event will offer the attendee. Many vague promotions begin with "You Are Invited to Attend. . ." or something limpid such as "Join Us for the 20th Annual Conference." These are far less compelling pitches than those that proclaim: "Learn How to Increase Your Profits" or "Ensure That Your Business Can Survive in the New Millennium."

A conference might be designed to focus on a number of objectives such as, for example, education, entertainment, and changing the future governance of the organization. If this is our hypothetical event, marketing should drive all of those objectives. As an example, print promotion should proclaim that when you attend this event, you will learn "Techniques for Success," revel in "The Greatest Celebration of the Decade," and discover how to "Position Our Association to Succeed in the New Millennium."

The essential point is that the marketing must begin when the planning process is launched. Only then can it serve as the greatest integral asset to drive attendance, profits, and repeat business at the next event.

EFFECTIVE MARKETING TAKES INTERNAL OBJECTIVES AND TURNS THEM INTO EXTERNAL RESULTS

Marketing should integrate all of the management decisions so that they focus on the goals and objectives of the event as well as those of the sponsoring organization itself. This integration may take many forms. It may be a subtle campaign to preconvince corporate shareholders or association leaders of the importance of their attendance and their personal vote on an issue. It may be employed to conduct research to assist in the event's site selection process. Marketing can play a vital role in the "search and discover" effort to identify new markets in which to promote an event. And, of course, it should include the other classic elements of marketing, such as advertising, telemarketing, and promotional campaigns, to bring all of the event goals to life.

In other words, the enlightened event professional will incorporate marketing at the outset of the planning process so that all goals, objectives, and strategies will be considered and amplified with marketing implications in mind. As you read this text, you will see how integrated marketing forms the glue that binds together the mission, functional implementation, final evaluation, and planning for future events. And you will learn the elements of an integrated marketing campaign.

The Multifunctional Discipline of Marketing

Few of us enjoy the opportunity to do only one thing in our jobs. As you pursue a career in event marketing, you will probably find yourself balancing that responsibility

with many others that may be totally unrelated.

In his book *Special Events*, Dr. Joe Goldblatt offers this personal observation to students in his event management program at George Washington University in Washington, DC:

Many of the students who apply for admission to the Event Management program tell me that although managing events was but one of their job responsibilities it was the one they most enjoyed. Therefore, they are seeking further training in this profession to improve their chances for long-term success doing something they truly enjoy. In learning these highly portable skill sets they are simultaneously increasing their opportunities for longterm career success in many other professions as well.

In this text, we will explore the many functions embodied in the marketing discipline. Among them are:

- Print media
- Electronic media
- Human dynamics
- Group dynamics
- Internal public relations
- External public relations
- Press relations
- Promotions
- Advertising
- Sales and merchandising
- Sponsorships
- Special celebrations
- And much more

You will find that the many other duties you have in your work will lead you to resources that can be of significant value to you in your event management and marketing responsibilities. That newspaper contact you have made in your government relations activities may help in placing a news release for an event you are charged with planning. The research firm that has been working to help your organization build