

Effectively Working with Venue Owner/Operators

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Goals of the session

- Sharing ideas to interest your venue owner/operators in hosting sports events benefitting the destination economically
- Recognizing the vast differences in our levels of experience as well as the uniqueness of our destinations, what is presented may be new ideas to some and reminders to others
- Encourage conversation/dialogue as we together discuss ways to more effectively work with venue owner/operators
- Without willing partners and access to utilizing their venues, our dreams of hosting events remain just this ... dreams!

Who are the owners/operators?

- Publicly-owned facilities managed by city and county parks and recreation departments, public authorities, private management companies
- Public and private school systems (grades K-12)
- Public and private colleges and universities
- Professional sports venues
- Privately-owned facilities (i.e., complexes for baseball, softball and soccer; golf courses, country clubs, etc.)
- Question: Do you have a list of contact information for each of the venues *available* to market to prospective clients?

Why they might not be interested

- Parks and recreation department personnel are usually not seeking additional events – they work a bunch already
- Schedules of primary tenants/users of venues take precedent
- Policies of sanctioning organizations (i.e., NCAA, collegiate conferences, state high school associations, etc.)
- Need for grass fields to have time to heal after a campaign has been completed and/or preparation for an upcoming season
- Insurance risks and liability issues
- Appropriate personnel (both in quality and quantity) not available *and* secured to host the event successfully

Why they *ought to be interested*

- Facility rental should be more than enough to cover the costs of the event allowing other parts of the venue to be enhanced
- Opportunity for concession profits to benefit some entity (i.e., facility, booster clubs, non-profit organizations, etc.)
- Opportunity for colleges and universities to expose campus to all prospective students and their families, not just student-athletes
- Host team as a part of the event (may not have to qualify)
- Enhancing the resume, preparing to host a high-profile event
- Public relations value of exhibiting partnership as a co-host

Overcoming the obstacles

- Learn the needs and concerns of the venue owner/operators
- Know who can diminish/eliminate these needs and concerns
- Understand the procedure for securing the use of the venue
- Appreciate the fact your need/desire is not their top priority
- Value the fact the venue is not interested in losing money, especially if there is another opportunity to generate revenue (i.e., golf courses have choice between an outing and event)
- Determine the flexibility of venues to host other events which are not the primary ones typically played there (i.e., converting baseball outfields into football fields)

The process to secure venues

- The decision-maker(s) may not be specifically responsible for the venues themselves (i.e., school systems may have principals and superintendents involved in this responsibility)
- Are facility rental costs pre-determined or negotiated?
- Who will be the contracting entity with the venue?
- Is there a champion in your community you can contact which improves the likelihood of a favorable outcome?
- When considering which event(s) to pursue, do you have the venue involved in the assessment of the benefits in hosting?
- Events need championship-quality venues run enthusiastically

Case Study A

- McDonald's All-American High School Basketball Games
- 2005 event held in South Bend, IN
- Games played at the University of Notre Dame (NCAA rules)
- Slam dunk/ 3-point contests at Bethel College (NAIA rules)
- Practice facilities at Indiana University – South Bend and Adams High School (security issues since school was in session)
- Event only had 48 players, but two participants (one male and one female) were University of Notre Dame recruits (publicity)
- National television audience for games and contests – immeasurable benefits for university, college and destination
- Nearly a half million dollars raised for Northern Indiana RMHC

Case Study B

- National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA)
Women's Golf National Championships
- 2005 and 2006 events at Blackthorn Golf Club, South Bend (IN)
- Destination was hosting a national collegiate championship
- Golf club was interested in increasing number of females playing the course (perception was the course was difficult) and building the resume to host other, more prestigious golf events
- Golf club received guaranteed income for a time of year (mid-May) which could be increment in northern Indiana
- Host team (Bethel College) received an automatic team entry, which they used in the recruitment process for student-athletes

Case Study C

- United States Tennis Association (USTA) Boys' 18 & 16 under National Championships
 - Held in Kalamazoo, MI for the past 67 years!
 - Kalamazoo College is the primary host and site of the major events (11 courts and a 3,000 seat complex)
 - Western Michigan University has 20 courts
 - Both Kalamazoo College and Western Michigan University have significant exposure to prospective students/student-athletes
 - Kalamazoo College beginning to treat Western Michigan University as more of a co-host for the championships
 - Western Michigan University President involved in negotiations

Case Study D

- Big League Softball World Series
- Presented by Little League Baseball, Inc. for girls ages 16-18
- Held in Kalamazoo (MI) since 1994, with the previous 14 years having another age group world series totaling 30 straight years
- Ten teams compete, four of which are international
- Championship game televised live on ESPN2
- Host team automatically entered – ensures crowds and interest
- Little League Baseball, Inc. loves the intimacy of the facility, the condition of the fields and the volunteers who help host players
- Local organizing committee works hard; tournament director in his mid 80's; will others be able to continue and secure event?

Questions/discussion

- Contact Information:
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- Thanks for the opportunity to share some thoughts!!