The Use Of Strategic Special Events In The Public Relations And Marketing Mix: A Graduate Course Curriculum

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The Use of Strategic Special Events in the Public Relations and Marketing Mix: a Graduate Course Curriculum

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts in Corporate and Public Communication

Seton Hall University
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Chapter 1

Introduction

“A word of caution [about the term] ‘Publicity stunts’...it’s a faux pas to use this term in public. Perhaps “special events” would be nicer. In the old days “publicity stunts” usually referred to wild schemes designed to get headlines. It might mean faking the kidnapping of a starlet, a bomb threat to a movie lot, announcing a no-chance candidate for a political office (to destroy the opposing party’s credibility), or announcing a bizarre invention (that never did and never will work).”

These days, “special events” are more professional, and often support the best interest of the community as a whole. It might be a company-sponsored camp for underprivileged children, company-sponsored participation in a special charity fund-raising event, or a company-sponsored scholarship or contest......Pillsbury’s Bake-Off, Purina’s Cat Chow Calendar Cat Contest, and the Colgate Dinah Shore Golf Classic are good examples of events with strong sponsor tie-ins that generate an uncommonly large volume of publicity.”

Martin Bradley Winston, author of Getting Publicity, understands how far the public relations industry’s use of special events has come since the early days of publicity stunts. Special events are one of the most powerful public relations, marketing, and communications tactics available to professionals. When strategically designed, the potential success is endless.
There are numerous definitions and interpretations of public relations, the most commonly accepted definition of the profession is that public relations is a management function that works to establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its publics. However, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) defines public relations as follows: public relations helps an organization and its public adapt mutually to each other.

While it may be hard to define what public relations is, it is much easier to understand and identify what it does. Public relations professionals manage their client’s reputation and image both proactively (through publicity) and reactively (through crisis public relations). They often accomplish this through a wide variety of tactics such as press releases, pitching and pitch writing, public service announcements, video news releases, special events, press conferences, media placements, publications, and countless others. The objective of most public relations campaigns is to have positive, correct messages about the client reach as many of the client’s publics as possible. Generally, the media is the easiest and quickest means to reach vast groups of people.

**Strategic Special Events**

Although special events are often used as a means to get publicity for a company, product, or cause; they are also employed to reach a specific audience in person in an attempt to get clear messages out about the company, product, or cause. Regardless of whether guests had a nice time, American corporations are focused on the bottom line. If public relations professionals, and special events professionals in particular, want special events to be viewed as a legitimate business venture, events must be held to the same standards of success as other projects: was the end result worth the investment?
Dictionary.com offers two definitions for an event and the slight difference in wording helps understand the difference between an event and a strategic special event. The definitions are as follows:

1. *Something that takes place, an occurrence*

2. *A significant occurrence or happening*

The difference between the two definitions may seem slight. However, to an experienced special events professional, the difference is monumental.

1. *Something that takes place, an occurrence*

This definition describes an event that has no specific goal, no outlined strategy. In the goal-oriented world of corporate America, this is an unsuccessful event simply because it just happened. There was no return on investment.

2. *A significant occurrence or happening*

The connotation of this definition is that of a strategic event that achieved predetermined goals. This event, this significant occurrence, has impact on its guests, the bottom line, and the organization’s goals. Return on investment is required, and can be proven.

While the author recognizes the difference may seem inconsequential to the casual reader, be assured that the difference is significant. The potential impact of special events is enormous, but in order for event professionals to gain prominence in the corporate world, they must be seated at the decision making table. Perfect menus and parties do not earn a seat at the table, clear, focused and strategic events earn respect.
The goals of a strategic special event must be tied directly to the goals of the entire organization. And the event's success must be measurable. Below are a few ways to determine if an event is a strategic event.

1. Did the event achieve specific, pre-determined goals?
2. Did the event garner media attention?
3. Did the event generate revenue?
4. Did the event generate donations/gifts?
5. Did the event improve the image/reputation of the organization?
6. Did the event deliver key organizational goals?
7. Did the event increase customer/employee loyalty?

The Author's Interest in the Topic

The author currently works in the industry as the assistant director for public relations and marketing for special events at a major New York metropolitan university. The author's interest in the industry began as an undergraduate student, receiving a Bachelor of Arts in communications with a concentration in public relations. Increasing the credibility and status of special events is a professional goal of the author, who believes that special event professionals are often viewed as glorified party planners. More specifically, the author believes that through the use of strategically designed special events, an organization can benefit financially by nurturing their clients socially.

On a More Personal Note

As a child, the author always fantasized about a career in destination management or event management. It sounded exciting and glamorous. But the author felt torn about whether or
not she should pursue special events as a career. Throughout high school and college, the author excelled academically and began to feel as if she should pursue what is traditionally considered a more challenging career path. Then, the author met a professor of a lifetime.

The author shared her concerns with the professor and the professor quoted a book that had also changed her life, "Do what you love and the money will follow." The author pondered the statement for nearly a year before finding the courage to follow her heart, deciding there could be a challenging and rewarding career in any industry. The author decided she wanted a career in special events but wanted to do more than plan the party, she wanted to contribute to the bottom line, to be respected as a business women, not just as a woman who could throw an amazing party.

The author is eternally grateful to her parents for sparking her imagination with their travels, to her professor for providing inspiration and courage, and to all the other events professionals who do more than just plan parties. It is the author's passion and drive to bring respect and credibility to the profession. This master's thesis is the first step.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to highlight the importance and relevance of special events in the public relations and marketing mix. In doing so, a graduate-level strategic events course curriculum will be developed. Ultimately, the author hopes that by adding graduate-level study of the impact and potential of special events, communications professionals will be better able to use events to maximize organizational success.
Thesis Question

What are the essential elements of a graduate strategic events curriculum that incorporates academic theory with real world business practices?

In addition to the primary thesis question, the author will attempt to answer the following subsidiary questions:

1. How can an event garner media attention?
2. How can an event generate revenue?
3. How can an event generate donations/gifts?
4. How can an event improve the image/reputation of an organization?
5. How can an event be used to deliver key organizational messages?
6. How can an event increase customer/employee loyalty?
7. Would a strategic events course help prepare future communications professionals to better understand how events can help achieve organizational goals?
8. Are special events a crucial part of a strategic public relations, marketing or communications plan?
9. Are events only successful if predetermined goals have been met and/or exceeded?
10. Is the potential impact of events successfully realized at most American corporations and organizations?
11. Must events prove a return on investment in order to be viewed as viable public relations, marketing or communications tactic?

The above mentioned thesis question and subsidiary questions will be answered through careful analysis of the current research on special events, public relations, marketing, and
other related topics. A carefully designed survey and expert interviews will also be implemented and examined.

Limitations of the Study

This study and the ensuing curriculum are designed to address the value of special events to various American corporations and organizations, it looks at special events as a tactic in a comprehensive public relations, marketing, or fundraising campaign. While many of the same principles apply to all events, this paper does not address an exhaustive variety of events such as conferences, trade shows, and others. The author recognizes many organizational goals can be accomplished by these events, but they were not analyzed in depth and are not the focus of this particular study.

Definition of Terms

Throughout this paper, the author will refer to numerous terms that are public relations, special events, and marketing industry jargon. Below, the author defines the terms as they will be used in the context of this paper.

1. Return on Investment

Return on investment (ROI) is the business phrase used to describe if a project, product, or other venture is profitable. ROI is often measured in dollars, but it can also be measured in other ways such as media attention, gift/grant income, new customer generation, and others. ROI takes into account all resources used to produce the product, project or venture such as human resources, time, money, and opportunity cost.
2. **Strategic Event**

A strategic event is a special event that is specifically designed to help achieve the organization's goals. Strategic events prove a return on investment and achieve pre-determined goals and objectives.

3. **Public Relations (PR)**

Public relations is a management function that works to establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its various publics.

4. **Market**

(1) A market is an audience that meets a specific set of criteria.

(2) A market also refers to the place of business, an abbreviation for the term marketplace.

5. **Marketing**

Marketing refers to the use of a strategic approach to reach an audience to deliver key messages about a product, service, event or other venture.

6. **Opportunity Cost**

Opportunity cost is the risk of not doing something. For example, an event may not prove a return on investment the first year but the opportunity cost of not having done the event might equal all future earning not realized, or a competitor may decide to produce something similar and now the opportunity cost of not having
done the event is heightened because your competition has now cornered the market.

7. Risk Management

Risk management is the process of anticipating, preventing, and minimizing the potential problems associated with a given event or project. Risk can be defined in terms of financial risk (costs, losses, etc.) and safety and liability risks (threats, hazards, weather etc.)

8. Sponsor(ship)

A sponsor is a company, organization, or individual that provides money, support or other resources to an event. The term sponsorship refers to a company that offers resources to an event in exchange for the opportunity to access key audiences for commercial reasons. For example, Tiffany’s may sponsor a high-end fundraising gala so they have the opportunity to access the guests of the event who are, demographically, a key audience for Tiffany’s.

9. Fundraising

Fundraising is the term used to describe the process of raising money for use by non-profit organizations. Events play a key role in the formal process of fundraising.

10. Goal

A quantitative objective that is determined before the planning of an event.
Special events are exciting and are a wonderful tool that communications professionals have to help accomplish their goals. With the scope of this study clearly delineated, the author will introduce the history, theory, and design of strategic special events in the upcoming chapters; keeping in mind that the end result is the creation of an effective and enticing graduate course curriculum on the use and design of strategic special events.
Chapter 2

History of Public Relations

"In a truly democratic society, everything depends on the consent of the public."

Thomas Jefferson.

While public relations is often viewed as a modern profession, the origins of the profession date back to antiquity. During the first century B.C. Romans coined the phrase Vox populi; Vox Dei, literally meaning, "The voice of the people is the voice of God." This quote is symbolic of the emerging understanding of the power of public opinion.

Examples of early public relations can also be seen in the Middle Ages. Pope Gregory XV founded the College for Propagating the Faith. Some consider this to be the first large-scale use of public relations. The College was created by the Roman Catholic Church to retain followers and recruit converts in the wake of the Reformation. Roots of the modern term propaganda have been linked to this era.

According to PRHistory.com, public relations began when people started communicating and needed to motivate others. In its earliest days, public relations was an attempt at large-scale persuasion.

Although the profession has roots in antiquity, public relations experienced its first great boom in the 17th century with the emergence of newspapers. With increasing numbers of
people having access to information and ideas, governments and leaders became concerned with public opinion. In the late 19th century and early 20th century the industry experienced another great expanse occurring when corporations realized there was money to be made by influencing public opinion.

Public Relations Timeline

The timeline below clearly shows how public relations grew as a profession both in scale and in respect throughout the ages. Although extensive, the timeline does not represent an exhaustive list of the industry’s milestones.

The information below was compiled using data from the following sources:

PRHistory.com
PR! A Social History of Spin
Dr. Rita Kirk Whillock’s A Brief History of Public Relations

Antiquity

Circa 1800 B.C. Farmers in ancient Sumeria produce a farm bulletin to educate farms on farming and crops

Circa 100 B.C. Romans coin the phrase Vox populi, vox Dei, “The voice of the people is the voice of God”

Middle Ages

Circa 1450 Following the invention of printing with moveable type, a variety of handbills were created to support and promote various causes

Circa 1600 Pope Gregory XV created the College for Propagating the Faith to retain followers and solicit converts in the aftermath of the Reformation.
Colonial Times

1748  King’s College (now called Columbia University) first uses news releases to solicit press coverage

1773  American colonists stage the Boston Tea Party, an event that publicly demonstrated frustration and unhappiness with the British. This event helped solidify public opinion against British rule.

1787  The Federalist Papers, a series of 85 pamphlets that were also reprinted in as articles in various newspapers, were created to generate support for the formal creation of the Unites States.

19th Century

Circa 1820  Under Andrew Jackson, Amos Kendall served as the first U.S. presidential press secretary

Circa 1840  P.T. Barnum pioneered press agentry

1889  First corporate public relations department established by Westinghouse

1895  Ford pioneered press product reviews

1896  The use of modern public relations in political campaigns begins with the presidential election between William McKinley and William Jennings Bryan.

1897  General Electric creates a publicity department

Early 20th Century

1900  The Publicity Bureau was organized in Boston as the nation’s first publicity firm, a forerunner of today’s public relations agencies
1916  Creation of the Committee on Public Information, headed by George Creel to generate and promote support of U.S. involvement in WWI

Depression/New Deal

1929  "The Golden Jubilee of Light" celebrated the 50th anniversary of the invention of the electric light bulb—considered by many to be the greatest world-wide public relations event of the century, orchestrated by Edward Bernays

1934  Franklin Delano Roosevelt used his famous "fireside chats" to instill comfort and confidence in the American people

1936  First widespread use of public opinion polling

WWII

1942  Office of War Information promoted public support for U.S. involvement in WWII

1946  First widespread use of television publicity

1948  Public Relations Society of America is founded
The Fathers of the Industry

P.T. Barnum

"The Mermaid, Woolly Horse, Ploughing Elephants, etc., were merely used by me as skyrockets or advertisements, to attract attention and give notoriety to the Museum and such other really valuable attractions as I provided for the public. I believe hugely in advertising and in blowing my own trumpets, beating the gongs, drums, etc., to attract attention to a show; but I never believed that any amount of advertising or energy would make a spurious article permanently successful." P.T. Barnum

P.T. Barnum (1810-1891), born Phineas Taylor Barnum, is most well known as being the creator of the Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey Circus. The circus was just one of his countless contributions. Barnum was much more than a circus owner, he was a master showman, marketer, and publicist.

Born in Bethel, Connecticut, Barnum was the youngest of 5 children. He held numerous jobs as a young man including selling lottery tickets and working as a clerk in his father's country store. Barnum's foray to greatness began in 1832 when he edited his own newspaper Herald of Freedom in Danbury, Connecticut. In addition to his natural talent for publicity, editing the newspaper helped sharpen his understanding of the potential power and influence of the press.

Barnum first entered show business when he purchased the services of Joice Heth, a woman claiming to be 161 years old and the former nurse of George Washington. Barnum toured Joice Heth around to various cities and due to Barnum's marketing of her, Joice Heth brought in over $1500 a week. Barnum next purchased the struggling Scudder Museum in
New York City and renamed it “Barnum’s American Museum.” Barnum exhibited over 500,000 natural and artificial curiosities from around the world. While the museum brought in steady money, Barnum was always looking for ways to increase business, and this is where his marketing and publicity genius came into play.

Irving Wallace, in his biography The Fabulous Showman, tells the story of how Barnum staged an event to create buzz about his museum:

“One day a plump beggar came by for a handout. Instead Barnum offered him a job at a dollar and a half a day. He handed the puzzled beggar five ordinary bricks.

“Now,” said Barnum, “go and lay a brick on the sidewalk at the corner of Broadway and Ann Street; another close by the Museum; a third diagonally across the way....put down the fourth on the sidewalk in front of St. Paul’s Church, opposite; then with the fifth brick in hand take up a rapid march from one point to the another, making the circuit, exchanging the your brick at every point. And say nothing to anyone....At the end of every hour by St. Paul’s clock show this ticket at the Museum door; enter walking solemnly through every hall in the building; pass out; and resume your work.

The beggar moved off with his five bricks, and began his idiot’s play. Within a half an hour, more than five hundred curious people were following him. In an hour, the crowd had doubled. When the brick-toting pied piper entered the museum, dozens bought tickets to follow him. This continued throughout the day for several days, and Barnum’s business showed a satisfying increase.”
Staging events like this were just one of his many tricks to increase business. Barnum often wrote letters to the editor of various newspapers concerning his museum, some praising, some criticizing. Either way the letters always generated additional business. Joe Vitale, author of *There's a Customer Born Every Minute: P.T. Barnum's Secrets to Business Success*, believes that advertising alone isn't enough, “It wasn’t until I began researching this book that I realized the full power of publicity. I learned that advertising wasn’t enough. I learned that you had to have an integrated marketing plan to achieve success. Barnum was a master at it. He knew that with strategic publicity you could get people to line up at your door to see anything you wanted to show them.”

P.T. Barnum is credited with many famous sayings, some he actually uttered, others he did not. One of the sayings he is incorrectly credited with is, “There is a sucker born every minute.” What Barnum really said was, “There’s a customer born every minute.” He truly believed there was a way to make money off of every person—if you knew what they wanted; a precursor to today’s market research.

Another famous Barnum quote is “Every crowd has a silver lining” Barnum believed that if he could gather a crowd of people, he could make money off the crowd. Today’s special events play on the emotions of crowds and the desire of people to be a part of a crowd.
Edward Bernays

Edward Bernays, born in Vienna in 1891 (died 1995), is considered by many to be the “Father of Public Relations.” Nephew of Sigmund Freud, the “Father of Psychoanalysis,” Bernays understood that in order to successfully sway public opinion, one must understand and integrate the study of the social sciences with press agentry. Furthermore, Bernays was never apologetic about the need for influencing public opinion.

In Propaganda, his most significant publication, Bernays argued that the scientific manipulation of public opinion was essential to overcoming the chaos and confusion of modern society: "The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in a democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country. ... We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of. This is a logical result of the way in which our democratic society is organized. Vast numbers of human beings must cooperate in this manner if they are to live together as a smoothly functioning society. ... In almost every act of our daily lives, whether in the sphere of politics or business, in our social conduct or our ethical thinking, we are dominated by the relatively small number of persons ... who understand the mental processes and social patterns of the masses. It is they who pull the wires which control the public mind." Although this attitude did not always win him friends, he always maintained that it was an admirable professional pursuit.

Throughout Bernays’ long and distinguished career, he crafted and implemented some of the most influential and successful public relations campaigns ever created. Bernays is even
credited with increasing the number of showets taken in America, a tactic created to sell more Ivory soap. It is through creative and innovative strategies that Bernays became to be the master of his craft.

Bernays' Utilization of Special Events

One of the most dangerous weapons in Bernays' arsenal was the special event. Bernays' use of spectacular special events is evidenced in his work for General Electric and Westinghouse's celebration of the 50th anniversary of the first incandescent (electric) light bulb and Luck Stripes' "Torches of Freedom".

Light's Golden Jubilee

According to the Museum of Public Relations, General Electric and Westinghouse approached Bernays in May of 1929 with the task of honoring the 50th anniversary of the light bulb with a celebration that recognized both the invention and the inventor, Thomas Edison. Bernays envisioning a grand celebration, titled the event: Light's Golden Jubilee.

The main event, the dedication of the Edison Institute of Technology in Dearborn, Michigan, was to be the event of the year. President Hoover would be present and would dedicate the building. The event was to be complimented with several other, smaller events and promotion such as the Diamond Jubilee, a light extravaganza in Atlantic City. Bernays began a major publicity push in May, beginning with sending the history of the incandescent bulb history to all managing editors of local and national newspapers, using letterhead that featured the name of prominent supporters such as President Hoover and Henry Ford.

Bernays approached the postmaster to create a commemorative stamp honoring the
invention, the stamp even included the event and campaign name, Light’s Golden Jubilee.

On the day of the dedication event, utility companies around the world shut down power for one minute in honor of Thomas Edison and his invaluable invention.

Needless to say, the event was a huge success. In attendance were such notable as Madame Curie, Henry Ford, Orville Wright, and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Speaking of the triumphs of the event, Bernays later said, “Public relations had passed a milestone on the road to public understanding and respect.” According to Bernays, the consent of the people could be engineered if the time for idea had come.
Torches of Freedom

In March 1929, Bernays engineered a truly genius event that would launch a remarkable marketing and advertising campaign. The effects of this event and the campaign that ensued continue to linger on in the 21st century.

Lucky Stripes Cigarettes hired Bernays to help expand the sales of cigarettes. At the time, women were only permitted to smoke in the privacy of their home. As any public relations professional would, Bernays did his homework. He consulted Dr. A.A. Brill, a psychoanalyst, to find the motivation for women to smoke. Dr. Brill concluded that cigarettes were equated with men and could be positioned as a source of rebellion for women. Bernays took this information and developed an entire campaign around it, cigarettes were to become "Torches of Freedom."
On March 31, 1929, Bertha Hunt walked down Fifth Avenue in the Easter Parade and did what was considered at the time indecent, she lit up a cigarette. The reaction she received would have been far less if the press had not been previously notified of Ms. Hunt’s and her friends’ intentions. The press had received a press release announcing that the women would be lighting, “Torches of Freedom” in the interests of equality between the sexes.

Ms. Hunt was, in fact, Edward Bernays’ secretary. Edward Bernays used his client’s product as a symbol for a social movement and he used a public event to unveil it. The stunt was a huge success, photographs and articles ran in newspapers across the country.

**Strategic Special Events**

Using events to get a message to the right audience is nothing new, as was previously discussed, this types of tactic has been employed for hundreds of years. However, the design of these events has changed with the times. Currently, there are countless examples of strategic events. One great example is a mobile marketing tour. Many corporations are currently utilizing mobile marketing tours to get the word out about their product while entertaining and engaging customers and potential customers at the same time.

In the January 2003 issue of *Event Solution Magazine*, author Tony Jones delves into the surprising success mobile marketing tours can have when planned and positioned properly. Jones also discusses how in order to stay productive event planners must be creative when traditional events are no longer producing the same results. “While trade show business has dipped from dwindling attendance and shrinking exhibitor rosters and Corporate America
laments the lack of effectiveness in its traditional advertising and marketing vehicles, event marketing including road show tours, has gradually gained momentum and sparked the kind of consumer interest and ROI results that dares other modes of promotion and branding to keep pace.” Jones continues, “Not surprisingly, mobile marketing is among the fastest growing segments of the event marketing arena. If consumers are going to ignore advertising and curtail trips to the mall, then it’s logical to want to take the products to where the public would rather be spending their time and money. Likewise with [business cutbacks in many areas] why not take the …interactive exhibit directly to their offices?”

This same article talks specifically about how the principles lending success to the mobile marketing tours are the same exact principles that make events an essential part of any public relations or marketing plan. The article quotes Michael Westcott, vice president for marketing for The George P. Johnson Co. (GPJ), “Traditional marketing isn’t working. Every study you see says that the number one influence on buying behavior is word of mouth, and with the fragmenting of media options and declining impact of advertising getting face to face is more important than ever.”

Strategic events, including marketing tours, are an ideal opportunity to get face time with a target audience and provide them with controlled messages and experiences that positively promote your brand.

While many American corporations use events to generate new customers or enhance customer loyalty, countless other American organizations are using events to achieve strategic objectives that are not as generally obvious. For example, there are literally thousands of non-profit organizations in the country using events to enhance fundraising
efforts. These organizations host a variety of events including events designed to raise revenue, events designed to cultivate a potential donor by providing an experience that helps shape the image of the organization positively, and events that help maintain the relationship with current donors in an attempt to encourage continued giving. Non-profit and fundraising are discussed in more details in strategic events curriculum in chapter 4.

A third example of a strategic event is an event specifically designed to generate media attention. American universities are always scouring the newspapers for potential event ideas. Universities are the home of higher learning and free-thinking, and are the perfect place to host debates, lectures, and panel discussions. These events have well known experts in the areas discuss the hottest and most controversial topics in the media in an attempt to have the reporters use the events as a research tool, and to hopefully generate media attention and recognition for proactively addressing these issues. Universities use these events to increase the image and reputation of the school.

Theses are just a few examples of the types of strategic events organizations and corporations use to help achieve organizational goals. The more creative and current the event is, the higher chance it will be successful. With this being said; why do events work; what makes people so susceptible to this type of tactic in particular?

Why Events Work

Human beings by nature are social beings, therefore it comes as no surprise that American corporations and organizations would want to exploit that fact; and host events, or gatherings of peoples, to further their own needs. While events are designed to meet the
needs of the person footing the bill; the needs and wants of the desired audience must be the
number one element in designing and planning any event.

There are many academic theories on why events work (some of which will be discussed
below), but the author believes the easiest and most simple way to understand the
effectiveness of events is to understand the most obvious reasons, without delving too
deeply into complicated academic theory. The main reasons events are effective are because
they are a “hot” medium for communication, they provide a social and group opportunity
and experience (often exclusive) to guests, and events can provide a business opportunity
and experience.

- Hot Medium of Communication

Communication mediums are often described using a scale of cold, cool, warm, and
hot. The more personal the medium, the “warmer” the medium is said to be. For
example, a direct mail piece is not as warm as a personalized letter, which is still not
as warm as a hand written note. Special events provide an opportunity for personal,
live, face-to-face contact with an audience. This provides an opportunity to
communicate directly and receive instant, direct feedback. For many businesses that
opportunity is priceless. People like personal attention. And personal attention
fosters the feeling of being valued.

- Social/Group Experience

The author believes most people attend events because of the eternal search for a
positive experience. People feel like a part of society when they attend large events.
They feel as if they are a part of something greater, larger than themselves. This
feeling is that which most people yearn for and live for—belonging. Events also offer guests and participants a one-of-a-kind experience, a “you should have been there” type of experience. The most successful special events create opportunities for guests to have special, unique experiences shared with others. Another aspect of the social motivation for people to attend events is the desire to “see and be seen.” While this motivation is more clearly seen (and exploited) in audiences that fall into the higher income and social circles, it is a factor in nearly every social grouping.

• Business Opportunity

In addition to looking for special experiences and social opportunities, many people attend special events as a business opportunity and to network. Events must give each member of the audience something and as America is a business and work obsessed culture, if a business opportunity is provided, many people will be more motivated to attend.

Culture

Webster’s New Riverside University Dictionary defines culture as the totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought typical of a population or community at a given time. Dictionary.com offers several definitions including the definition of culture as the predominating attitudes and behavior that characterize the functioning of a group or organization. While difference in definitions may be solely semantics, the enormity of the impact of culture can never be overstated.
Even though culture is commonly thought of in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, and citizenship; those label are just the beginning. Corporations looking to win loyalty and market share must understand that they need to identify with customers on a deeper level and with a keen understanding of culture.

Cultures are defined by any one or any combination of the following culture categories:

1. **Objective Driven**: an example of an objective based culture is graduate students. The common bond between most graduate students is the objective of obtaining a master’s degree.

2. **Interest Based**: sharing an interest or hobby is also a basis for many cultures. There are cultures build around owning and riding Harley Davidson motorcycles or being a Philadelphia Eagles fan.

3. **Demographic**: this type of culture is defined by quantitative data such as age, race, income, and education.

4. **Belief Centered**: the best examples of belief centered cultures are religions and political parties.

5. **Regionality Founded**: nationality is a regionality founded culture because the culture is defined by a region or geography. For example, the Japanese culture is a regionality founded culture.
6. **Experience Based:** sharing an experience can also bring people together and is often the basis of a particular culture. Veterans are members of an experience-based culture, as are support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous.

7. **Behavior Based:** Drug users, dieters, and regular exercisers are examples of behavior-based cultures. Members of behavior-based cultures have similar habits.

While these categories can define any number of cultures, it is important to keep in mind that there are countless sub-cultures within almost all cultures and the differences between the two can be just as important as the similarities. When considering a culture, or subculture, the following aspects of each should be kept in mind: traditions, norms, rituals, rites, parlance, values, sub-culture, history, points of pride, icons and anti heroes, self-identity, external perceptions and stereotypes, common concerns, origin, credo, conflict with mainstream, confidence factor, and confluence.

Once an organization understands the dynamics of an individual culture and its members, the organization is better able to design events that will be effective with the targeted audience. For example, an organization hosting an event designed to attract members of the Jewish faith must consider offering kosher food items. Similarly, an organization wanting to have event messages resonate with guests, might consider referencing one of the culture’s heroes or mention its confluence to society. Perhaps even more important than making special note of the target audience’s cultural dynamics, is the knowledge that when these dynamics are not considered and not recognized the audience is not exploited to maximum advantage.
Maslow's Hierarchy of Need

In addition to understanding culture, a business can only be successful when they realize and respect the fact that all customers, clients, donors, and community members are human- and that they all share the same basic needs.

According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Need, there are five general types of needs. They are physiological, safety, love, esteem and self-actualization. Maslow's theory states that lower level needs must be satisfied before a person can pursue upper level needs and act unselfishly. This translates directly into dollars and cents: fulfill my needs or I am unable to open my wallet. When designed properly events can fulfill, or at least temporarily fulfill these needs for customers, clients, or donors in such a way that benefits businesses and organizations.

Photo courtesy of http://web.wlu.edu/~gwynn/maslow/btm
Physiological needs are the very basic human needs such as air, water, food, sleep and sex. When these are not met, humans may feel sickness, irritation, pain or discomfort. These negative feelings motivate people to find a way to satisfy the needs as soon as possible in an attempt to survive. If and when these needs are met, one is able to think about other needs. This is why you would be hard pressed to ever attend an event where food and beverage are not served. Many people associate food with love, and event planners have been very successful capitalizing on that association.

Safety needs have to do with establishing stability and consistency in a chaotic world. These needs are the need for a home and a family. Safety needs are also thought to motivate religious feelings. If these needs are not met, for example, if a person’s home is an abusive dysfunctional home, the next level of need, love and belonging, cannot be attained.

The needs of love and belonging relate to the human desire to belong to and be accepted by others and by groups. As mentioned above, humans are social beings and crave being loved (non-sexually) by others. This need can be realized through clubs, work groups, religious groups, gangs, family, friends, and others. Many organizations and corporations use language such as community and family at events to help foster the feeling of belonging. It is very common for speakers at large events to refer to the audience as “my friends.” Concert promoters play off this emotion as well, creating an experience that makes you feel like being a fan of the performer makes you part of a special club.

Esteem needs are broken down into two levels. The first is self-esteem and the second is the attention and recognition that comes from others. They are related and interconnected, but
often function separately. For example, people who often have all of their other needs met may feel the need to drive a flashy car or buy an obscenely large home because it raises their level of esteem and often elicits a response (i.e. attention from others). This need is extremely relevant to special events. Two examples follow:

1. Event organizers have long used awards and honors to recognize very successful or well know people. This is a very effective tactic, especially for fundraising events. Very often non-profits will honor, or give an award to, someone who has a large group of people who will feel compelled to attend the event on their behalf, or who will appreciate being honored in front of a large group of his or her peers, family or friends. These award recipients often make large donations to the organizations that honor them.

2. Many corporation and human resource departments understand that employee recognition events are so successful because of this desire, this need to be recognized by others. Events that recognize breed loyalty.

The need for self-actualization has to do with the desire to fulfill one's potential and be all that one is capable of being. People who have every other need fulfilled are free to maximize their potential. These people often seek great knowledge, peace, oneness with God and other similar transcendental experiences; the type of experiences most people are too busy working to seek or even dream of. Very often children born to extremely wealthy family explore this level of need.
Return on Investment

Every industry has its own way of proving return on investment. For the purpose of simply understanding the concept and relating it to special events a simple equation is helpful.

\[
\begin{array}{c c}
\text{Time} & \text{Revenue/Gifts/Grants} \\
\text{Resources} & \text{Media Placements} \\
\text{Risk} & \text{Influence} \\
\text{Opportunity Cost} & \text{New Customer Generation}
\end{array}
\]

Time represents the number of employees dedicated to the event and the number of hours each employee spends on the project.

Resources represent any capital or possessions used in the planning or production of the event (money, computers, travel, etc.) Resources are most often calculated in dollars.

Opportunity Cost is the cost of not doing the event. For example, if a company choose not to go ahead with a proposed mobile marketing tour highlighting a new product, the opportunity cost can be viewed as the number of potential impressions lost. It can also be viewed as losing any number of potential new customers times the average amount each customer will spend over the life of the relationship.
Risk must always be included in the equation as well. Some questions to consider: Does the potential return outweigh the risk? How much risk can be legally insured against? What would the headline be if the worst risk was realized? How would we respond?

Basically, ROI is the notion that in the end result must justify the means. Businesses are most often focused on dollars figures and event ROI can often be demonstrated that way. However, it is imperative the special event professionals educate organization leadership to understand that a positive return can be more than just hard dollars. For example, media impression, influence, new customer generation and increased customer loyalty are all positive examples of return that are not best expressed in dollars. Revenue, donations and grants are examples of event ROI that can be expressed in hard dollar figures.

The information provided in this chapter demonstrates that special events are much more than great parties. Special events are complex strategic tool that American corporations and organizations have to help achieve their goals. Just like an advertising campaign, special events are designed through a delicate balance of careful research, solid business practices and unabashed creativity.
Chapter 3

Research Methodology

"If you have knowledge, let others light their candles in it." Margaret Fuller

Survey Design and Methodology

Various methods of research were employed to obtain the information utilized in this paper, including the implementation of an original survey and expert interviews.

The author designed an original survey to gauge the opinions of seasoned public relations professionals regarding the use and value of special events in the industry today. While many of the responses validated the author’s initial hypothesis; several responses revealed to the author interesting perspectives about special events.

The survey was distributed to members of the New Jersey Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and the International Special Events Society (ISES), as well as to attendees at the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education’s (CASE) special event and marketing conferences. In total, 61 completed surveys were returned. 54 were utilized to compile the following data. The surveys not used to compile this data were either incomplete or not valid.
The survey consisted of 3 sections. Participants completed the first section by indicating their level agreement with each of 5 statements. Participants chose from either strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree or strongly disagree.
Survey Results and Analysis: Section 1

Statement #1

In general, a strategic special events course would help prepare future communications professionals to better understand how events can help achieve organizational goals.

An astounding 96% of respondents either strongly agree or agree with statement #1 and believe a strategic special events course would be beneficial to future communications professionals. This data validates the objective of this study and can be used as a basis for the assumption that public relations professionals believe special event skills are essential to a successful public relations career, similar to writing skills and persuasion skills, disciplines that already command a plethora of graduate level courses at American universities.

For example, Seton Hall University offers several writing courses and at least two persuasion courses in the Corporate and Public Communication program, the master's program for which this thesis is a requirement.
Statement #2

Special events are a crucial part of a strategic public relations, marketing or communications plan.

Nearly all respondents, 93%, believe special events are vital to a successful public relations, marketing or communications plan. Not even one respondent disagreed with the statement. This is powerful data as it suggests that seasoned public relations professionals use special event tactics regularly. If events are being used regularly in the industry, aspiring professionals should be given the opportunity to study the topic in a structured, accredited manner— as part of a degree program. Kathleen Donohue Rennie, APR (accredited public relations professional) believes that special events often provide the impetus for implementing all the other traditional tactics such as press releases, pitch letters, and photo opportunities, and that is why the value of special events is undeniable.
Statement #3

For the most part, events are only successful if predetermined goals have been met and/or exceeded.

37% of survey participants strongly agreed that an event's success is directly related to meeting or exceeding pre-determined goals. Another 37% agreed. However, the author was surprised to see that 22%, nearly ¼ of respondents, disagreed with statement #3. While clearly the majority of respondents agreed with the statement, the author supposes that the other participants felt that success can be measured by some other means. The author agrees that there can be successes realized from an event that were in addition to those that were expected, but the author, supported by this data, maintains that an event's success must be gauged by setting pre-determined goals.
Statement #4

The impact and potential of special events is successfully realized at most American corporations and organizations.

The author's hypothesis for this question was that while American companies do utilize special events, they do not currently realize the full potential of events. The statement was posed in reverse so that not all the author's hypothesis could be supported by choosing the same response, strongly agree. Most of the respondents shared the same sentiments as the authors, choosing disagree. However, this question proved to be a revelation, with 31% agreeing with the statement; implying they currently feel events are taken full advantage of. Both experts interviewed for this project believe that American corporations waste too many resources on unsuccessful events, and that the potential will be realized when corporations hold fewer, more strategic, and more successful events (more on the expert interviews below).
Statement #5

Generally, events must prove a return on investment in order to be viewed as a viable public relations, marketing or communications tactic.

Proving return on investment, demonstrating an event’s worth, is never an easy task but 29% strongly agree it is necessary in order to be viewed as a viable tactic. Although not as empathically, another 35% agree proving return on investment is necessary. However, it must be noted that 29% disagreed with statement #5. The author believes so many participants responded with that answer because they felt the survey implied return on investment referred solely to the financial connotation of term. It was not explicitly written that return can be reported and represented in numerous ways, not just in dollars and cents.
Survey Results and Analysis: Section 2

The second section of the survey consisted of 11 potential components of a special events course. Respondents rated each item according to its relevance in the proposed course. The following scale was used: 5 = Very Important, 4 = Important, 3 = Relatively Important, 2 = Not Important, 1 = Not Needed at All.

On the next page, a graph depicts the results of the second section of the survey. Below the graph, the potential components are listed in order of importance as gauged through the survey results. The percentage in parenthesis represents the total percentage of participants who chose either very important or important. If there were identical percentages, the component with the larger percentage of very important responses is listed first. In those cases, the percentage of very important responses is listed also. The graph is shown on the next page to allow both the graph and the percentage table to be seen together.
1. Marketing & Promotion (100%/78%)
2. Budget Management (100%/74%)
3. Media Relations (100%/70%)
4. Cultural Considerations (78%)
5. Market Research (74%/37%)
6. Etiquette (74%/33%)
7. Legal Issues (70%)
8. Sociology of Events (67%)
9. Proving Return on Investment (66%)
10. Proposal Writing (63%)
11. Event Technologies (59%)
12. Event Sponsorships (50%)
After analyzing the data from this section of the survey, the author was most surprised with the responses for cultural considerations, sociology of events, and proving return on investment. Cultural considerations is ranked fourth on the list while sociology of events was eighth. This was surprising because culture and sociology of events are so closely related. The sociology of events, or why an event works, and why people are intrigued by events, is dependant on the culture of a specific target audience. The sociology of an event for the affluent socialites of New York is often exclusivity, while the sociology of an event for a college student is often belongingness.

The culture of the audience and the sociology of events work in tandem and the author sees them as essential partners in successful event designs. The author hypothesizes that participants interpreted “cultural considerations” to only mean ethnic and nationality based cultural considerations, such as food, eye contact, hand gestures and others. While these types of cultures are undeniably important, the cultures within these broader groups, such as homeowners, retired persons, newlyweds, and college students; are just as important, if not more important. In relation to strategic events, the culture of most importance is the culture that the majority of your audience identifies with.

The second surprise to the author was that proving return on investment was revealed to be ninth on the list of importance. This was a revelation to the author, but again it is important to restate what was noted in the analysis of survey section 1, that perhaps the survey participants responded with the notion that return must always be proven in dollars and cents. The author maintains that an event must prove results that can somehow, either directly or indirectly, be linked with the organization’s bottom line, hard dollar figures are not the only way to prove return. This data has only reinforced the author’s belief in the
importance of teaching students about return on investment as it relates to events. The
notion that there is only one way to prove return must be eliminated in order to prove the
value of special events to corporations and organizations.

Survey Results and Analysis: Section 3

The third and final section of the survey consisted of optional questions. It asked
participants to fill out information such as name, title, age, sex and education. More than half
of the survey participants did not complete section 3. However, the majority of respondents
who did complete section 3 were female and the average age was 37.
Expert Interviews

Expert interviews were utilized to gain primary knowledge from seasoned professionals who have worked directly on many events and who have seen the successful, and unsuccessful, use of special events. The interviews provided in-depth, real world information and advice not available through books or surveys.

Susan Diamond is accredited public relations professional with over 25 years experience in public relations and special events. Ms. Diamond began her career as a public affairs officer for the U.S. Navy and has worked in nearly all public relations capacities including corporate, agency, higher education, and healthcare environments. Diamond is a member of the New Jersey Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America.

Kathy Donohue Rennie, also an accredited public relations professional, is a partner in the successful New Jersey public relations agency, McGraw and McGraw. In addition to over 15 years experience as a practitioner, Rennie is a professor of public relations at Seton Hall University. Rennie has taught both undergraduate and graduate level courses. She is also a member of the New Jersey Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America.

The following are the questions and responses from the expert interviews.

1. Do you feel special events play an important role in public relations, marketing, and communications programs? Why or why not?
Susan Diamond, “Special events play a very important role in most public relations, marketing and communications programs. The events provide an organization with the ability to expose its products or services to new prospects, clients or customers; reinforce a relationship with existing clients and customers; thank clients and customers for business; launch a new product or service; generate media exposure; establish, reinforce or change an image/reputation for the organization; raise money or develop contacts for raising money; celebrate success; or reward or recognize employee contributions (financial or otherwise).”

According to Kathy Rennie, special events are a very important tactic. Anything that enables you to communicate key messages is an important tactic and special events have the ability to send the biggest messages. They are the reason for other tactics. “What’s the picture,” that is what is most important about special events. They are the glue that holds other PR tactics together, because as the age old saying goes, actions speak louder words.

2. Do you feel that a strategic events course would help prepare future communications professionals for understanding the important role events play in the PR/marketing mix? Why or why not?

Susan Diamond, “Yes, a strategic events course would assist professionals in developing strategies for maximizing the value of an event and to learn methods to creatively develop dynamic events that will generate attendance and media attention.”
Kathy Rennie agrees that a strategic events course is absolutely necessary because you can either do [events] really well or really poorly. What distinguishes an event as a great event is if it is newsworthy. A course can teach strategies for creating newsworthy events.

3. **What are the crucial competencies for a communications professional to get out of an events course?**

Susan Diamond, “Key competencies would include the ability to develop events that meet the goals/purposes of the organization, the ability to budget events cost-effectively and accurately, the ability to construct dynamic and creative events that “wow” attendees and encourage media attention, and the ability to appropriately “sell” events to senior management when an organization’s goals would be best met from an event.”

Kathy Rennie notes that while there several key concepts that need to be addressed the most important are planning and writing the plan (or proposal), understanding newsworthiness (see what is covered in the newspapers), branding the environment (tie everything to the brand), media relations, and risk management (the “what ifs”).

4. **Do you believe American corporations and organizations could take better advantage of special events? How?**
Susan Diamond, “Yes. Organizations often do not clearly set out goals and measures for an event prior to developing and staging the event. Additionally, events should be measured based upon realistic measures that are reflective of the goals for the event—not on the basis of an organization’s overall goals or an unrealistic, “pie-in-the-sky” goal that is impossible to achieve. If an event is developed to kick-off a new product or service, it is unrealistic and inappropriate to expect that it will boost or immediately generate sales. A more realistic expectation of success would be that one national, three regional and three local media outlets will run stories about the event or that 40 potential buyers will attend the event and be exposed to the product.

Additionally, organizations often do not appropriately follow through with events, allowing them adequate time to appropriately develop. Most events begin small and build through the years; there are few overnight successes. Pulling the plug on an event before it has had the time to achieve its goal is comparable to pulling an advertising campaign before it has had the opportunity to generate sufficient impressions. Often, tangential to this point, is that events are staged that do not have sufficient lead time to allow appropriate planning, invitations, follow up etc., or are planned at the convenience of the organization rather than for the audience that is being sought. Lastly, organizations sometimes decide they wish to become known for a specific type of event, e.g. a lecture series. The organization then expects to hold one or two lectures and expect that it should have achieved its goals. Organizations that are successful in associating themselves with a type of event make long-term commitments of resources, time and staffing to those events. Examples of this would be NBC’s sponsorship of the Olympics or the NY Athletic Club’s
sponsorship of lectures or Quinnipiac or Marist's sponsorship of surveys or, on a larger level, Gallup polls."

Kathy Rennie maintains that corporations can take better advantage of special events. Corporations can make the events more mission based and more newsworthy. Many corporations just are not doing events well. They need to differentiate themselves and their events. For example in certain industries there are events that are expected, and therefore corporation do them event though they have no strategic purpose and achieve no goals. Bank grand opening are one example. She believe banks should revisit the planning and purpose of these cookie cutter opening events.

5. How do you personally prove an event is successful to your stakeholders?

What are other ways to prove an event is successful? Are community relations events different?

Susan Diamond, "A communications professional who is conducting an event must set clear goals/purposes for the event prior to the development of the event along with realistic measures that are agreed upon by all. Then, the event is constructed to achieve those goals. When this is done properly, it is easy to demonstrate the success of the event. The Seton Hall University "Voices of Our Time" Lecture Series was a good example of this—the event was developed to highlight the Honors Program and associate Seton Hall with academic excellence by inviting high level, critical thinkers to campus. Secondary goals were to provide enhanced academic experience
to current students, improve community relations with neighbors in South Orange and provide a venue for development officers to bring prospects interested in honors and the arts (in particular one Board member). Target audiences were opinion leaders, guidance counselors, media, prospective students, current students, key donors and board members and members of the local community.

The individual lectures and the series as a whole were hugely successful when measured by these goals—high attendance (students, media, community, key board members), media exposure (NY Times, Newark Star-Ledger, other major outlets), association with honors and academic excellence (blanketing of invitations to opinion leaders, guidance counselors etc. resulting in RSVPs from around the country) and the resulting $1 million donation from the key board member targeted and—as a bonus—the donation and development of a second lecture series by another board member. The series of events developed problems after new leadership decided they did not like the original goals of the series and wished to judge the events on new measures (number of high level prospects in attendance and recognition of the College of Arts and Sciences).

As far as other means of demonstrating success beyond the strategic means—
anecdotal results are valid in support of other more concrete evidence e.g. "buzz". Successful events generate buzz. When a [high-level guest lecturer tells the president of the organization] that friends of his called him from all over the country to say they saw the NY Times ad about his lecture at Seton Hall or when a [performer’s]
rep calls to say she had a wonderful time and she'd love to place other performers with this organization anytime or when the Chief of Police has such a good time at the event that he calls the next day to ask for a copy of the photo taken of he and his wife—then you have anecdotal evidence of success or buzz. These anecdotes cannot stand alone but are very effective supporting documentation. Community relations events should have goals as well. These goals should include the invitation of and attendance at the event by target audiences, the generation of media coverage or development of collateral materials to later be sent to media or prospective customers. Also, the reaction of internal leadership is key (if the President has the opportunity to hobnob with the Village President or a visiting dignitary or other key attendee and feels it was a productive use of his time) and of course, last but not least, buzz.”

Kathy Rennie believes that proving success to stakeholders varies depending on the size and type of the event. The first means to proving success is to first have clear goals from the onset, and the success of an event must be measured according to those predetermined goals. Secondly, educate the client on realistic expectations. Rennie uses clips and categorizes them according to level of media outlet, she also uses exit surveys to gauge success. Rennie also stresses the importance of recognizing the ramifications of not doing an event, or the opportunity cost. As she mentioned in her response to the current use of events by corporations, Rennie maintains that while some events are expected, and have become trite and mundane, there may be implications if the “expected” events are not done. This must be considered and carefully calculated. Rennie also believes one of the best ways to
judge success is when your event becomes what you say it is. For example Rennie worked on an event she branded as “New Jersey’s Fall Social Event of the Season.” She promoted this event that way and after a few years, the event became just that-New Jersey’s fall social event of the season. This also shows that not every event can achieve success its first time, if it is to be a long term goal, the design of the event must reflect that. A product launch is looking to get the name of the product and the product out to the public as fast as possible and make an impression, this can be done perhaps in one large flashy event, but if the goal is to be considered a caring corporation who views itself as part of the community, one flashy event won’t work-you’ll need event with staying power, one that can continue.

6. How do you prove that PR tactics such as impressions (made through the media) translate into dollars for American corporations and organizations?

Susan Diamond, “I think this is the biggest problem with corporate or organizational expectations. Events (or most PR tactics, for that matter) rarely generate money for an organization directly. What they do is generate dollars for the bottom line indirectly. Events are one tool in the arsenal and are best used to set the stage for interactions that lead to new business, that introduce new products or businesses, that thank or recognize the commitment of resources, or that generate attention that will later result in new business. [An event I recently worked on was a good example of this] was Seton Hall University’s Faith Based Initiatives Panel. It is a perfect example of this. The Center for Public Service and the Institute on Work made several key contacts at this event that resulted in grants, access to opinion leaders in
the field, awareness of their services and, potentially, new students. Once again, the purpose of the event must be clear from the outset. Even an event that is purely celebratory in nature should have all in agreement on the goals. For example the goals can be that everyone that should attend does and that those at the event have a good time. This usually isn’t difficult to measure. Media impressions, on the other hand, are designed to move consumers along a marketing continuum: awareness, knowledge, positive knowledge, behavior change, and advocacy. New campaigns primarily contribute to awareness or image. These can be measured in attitude surveys. The important point I always try to drill home (and this is difficult) is that you cannot generate behavior—whether it is a donation or the purchase of a product or service—without awareness.

Additionally, awareness is not something you achieve and then it’s done. The marketing continuum is just that—it’s continuous. You must consistently build awareness and work to generate the behavior you seek, ultimately developing advocacy for your product or service. Then, others help you market. This is the basis premise behind the development and nurturing of university alumni relations programs.”

According to Kathy Rennie, the best way to convey the value of media impressions to corporate leadership is to demonstrate the advertising equivalency in dollars of the media hits received. Furthermore, she insists on educating the leadership to understand that although advertising equivalency will give you a hard figure to compare, the figure is an estimate and is usually an underestimate because it does not figure in the extra credibility a third party endorsement (such as quoting a member of
your company as an expert) brings to the value of the impression. Rennie also maintains that the value of public relations can be seen in the fall of advertising and the continued rise of public relations. Public relations, including special events, are indirect means of attaining a goal, they can raise awareness and influence opinion, but there is only so much communication can do and it is remiss to assign expectations of communications tactic, such as public relations and special events, that are not inherent to its nature.

7. Is there an example of an event you produced or worked on in your career that feel was especially successful?

Susan Diamond, "I put together the 1984 Armed Forces Ball in Chicago. The primary goals of the event were to highlight the presence and importance of the contribution of all the armed services to the public, opinion leaders and the media, to celebrate those contributions with local and national leaders both in and outside the military and lastly as a modest fundraiser for Navy Relief. The coordination of the event rotated between the Army and the Navy annually. The year I put the event together, my boss, the Admiral who ran Great Lakes, wished to ensure that the celebration included large numbers of enlisted personnel from all the services. This had never been a priority in the past and consequently the event had primarily attracted senior officers along with the local and national leaders."
The 1984 event was structured so that not only were opinion leaders and corporate leaders invited to purchase tables for their own use, they were encouraged to purchase tables that could be used by sailors, soldiers, airmen and marines who had shown exemplary service. The black-tie event drew 1350 people, flag officers from each of the services including the Chief of Naval Operations, the four-star general who ran NATO, the Commandant of the Coast Guard, the Commandant of the Marine Corps and the regional air force general. Military performing units from throughout the country provided the entertainment and the event raised more money and had more attendees than any other previous Armed Forces Ball.

Additionally, more than 350 enlisted personnel were able to participate for the first time. The event generated extensive coverage locally and in military circles and was a tremendous success i.e. the goals were successfully achieved. The highlight of my night was when my boss, the Admiral (who was not a warm and fuzzy person), came over to me, gave me a big hug and told me how pleased he and the Chief of Naval Operations were. This is an important point—regardless of anything else, the leadership of the organization needs to be pleased for the event to be considered a big success.”

8. **What are the top factors you take into account when planning an event?**

Susan Diamond, “The goals of the event; how will we measure success? How will we create a memorable event (the wow factor)? Who needs to be there? How do we maximize the event to achieve the most from it?”
Kathy Rennie's top factors are the business objective of the event, the communication goal of the event (usually stated in a verb: educate, communication, raise awareness), messaging (the call to action, what do you want them to leave thinking), branding the environment (every aspect must reflect and tie in to the brand) and getting the right people involved to maximize success.

9. Is there anything in particular you would like to share about PR, marketing, communications or special events that you feel would aide me in my research and/or career?

Susan Diamond, “Don’t forget that special events are one tool, one tactic in achieving an organization’s goals. It is critically important for an organization to have an integrated PR and marketing program so that expectations from any one of those tactics are not too unrealistic. Additionally, on the flip side, do not think small. An event, or any appropriately executed tactic, can achieve or contribute to the achievement of other organizational goals—even if they are not the goals of the particular tactic. For example, a fundraiser could provide an opportunity for a dean to connect with reporter who is researching the same topic the dean wrote her thesis on—or that reporter may have a daughter looking at colleges. Maximizing the impact of every tactic, and thus of your entire PR & Marketing program, is the quickest, most effective means to success.”

Kathy Rennie believes all future communications professionals should be aware of what they are in control of and not to promise results that cannot be directly
achieved through communication or its tactics such as special events. Understand the difference between a business objective and a communication goal. Understanding how these intermingle is the key to good public relations.

The results of the survey and the data provided through the expert interviews serve as the basis of the strategic special events curriculum presented in chapter 4. This primary data helps to bridge the gap between the real world event business and the information provided in textbooks.
Chapter 4

The Program

"It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge."

Albert Einstein

Curriculum Overview

According to Michael Milano and Diane Ullius; authors of Designing Powerful Training, the
Sequential-Interactive Model; “powerful training is effective, efficient, and engaging.”

Furthermore, they maintain that effective training accomplishes specific objectives relevant
to participant's success. Efficient training meets those objectives without wasting time or
effort. Engaging training attracts learners and incorporates their experiences into the
learning.

Additionally, Milano and Ullius discuss adults as learners. A vast part of an adult's self
esteem is tied to his or her experiences and they want to apply that experience in learning
situations. Generally, adults learn best when they are able to use it. Therefore, training
designed for adults must incorporate this experience.

The author integrated the above concepts into the following strategic events curriculum. The
curriculum is designed for graduate level communications students who are looking to
enhance their knowledge of how strategic special events can help achieve organizational
goals, to learn key strategies for designing effective events, and to understand how special
events fit into public relations, marketing and communications campaigns.
The curriculum is divided into ten topics, three of which are two-week lessons. The curriculum is designed to correlate with the typical length of a graduate semester. Each topic is supplemented with text readings and homework assignments. The author envisioned this course being taught seminar style with the instructor introducing the topic through a lecture for a portion of the class, followed by a dialogue moderated by the professor discussing both the in-class lecture and the reading assignment. A discussion of the homework assignment from the previous class meeting would be discussed at the beginning of the class. Finally, the very last portion of the class would be dedicated to explaining the new homework assignment.

Ideally, the author envisions the homework assignments being used as a tool to relate the in-class discussion to the actual profession, to gauge the participation level of each student and to provide a hands-on approach towards real event industry work.

The curriculum uses the following two publications as the course textbooks.


*The textbooks will be referred to simply as Event Marketing and Event Management when reading assignments are listed in the following curriculum.

The author also utilizes selected articles from various publications such as, Event Solutions Magazine, Special Events Magazine, and other trade publications. The author also suggests that students subscribe to PR Weekly, a weekly public relations trade publications that features
current industry issues and highlights successful campaigns and tactics. This publication will give students an insider's perspective into the use of special events in the current communications field.
Course Curriculum

1. Industry Introduction

"Every man's occupation should be beneficial to his fellow-man as well as profitable to himself. All else is vanity and folly." P.T. Barnum

Reading Assignment:

Event Management
Chapters 1, 2, 3

Lecture Notes:

Co-authors of Dollars and Events: How to Succeed in the Special Events Business, Dr. Joe Jeff Goldblatt and Frank Supovitz describe the current special events industry, "Although many businesses are in a state of rapid change, the special events industry is actually a multidisciplinary super industry comprised of many older, traditional industries. These industries include consulting, fund-raising, sports management, party supply sales and equipment rentals, lighting and sound rentals, audio-visual rentals, décor, catering, and many others. For the first time in the history of modern professions, many of these industries have banded together to form a new field of endeavor- which some would define as an emerging discipline- entitled Event Management. This professional field is comprised of tens of thousands of individuals and thousands of business organizations struggling to make a living from a vocation they love."
While there are countless ways to describe the current industry, there are two main points that are especially noteworthy in the description above. The most important point made is that this new super industry is an emerging discipline. This is true. From the research, planning, promotion, production and execution of a special event, skilled professionals are necessary, hence the necessity of this curriculum. Numerous other institutions of higher education are recognizing this trend. For example, George Washington University currently offers an Event Management certificate program.

The second point that struck me was the keen understanding that special events are part of a "multidisciplinary super industry." While they mentioned many key elements of the industry, there are still countless others including publications, public relations, marketing, and media relations. This course focuses on how strategic special events fit into the public relations and marketing mix, and on how to create and execute strategic special events.

Leonard H. Hoyle, author of the course textbook, Event Marketing, goes further and states the following in the preface to his book, "Everyday, the professional event manager must 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; and evaluation and analysis techniques, and that's just a partial list."

While Hoyle, Goldblatt and Supovitz noted quite correctly how complex special event planning and management are, it is also imperative to understand the role they play in organizations and corporations.

Homework:

1. Bring in a media clip, invitation, poster or other collateral material relating to a special event.

2. Write a brief description of the best special event you ever attended.
2. Sociology of Special Events & Understanding your Audience

(2 session lesson)

"Eat, Drink, and Be Merry." Dave Matthews

Reading Assignment:

Event Management
Chapter 12

Lecture Notes:

Why do people attend events? Dave Matthews, a contemporary singer and songwriter, had it correct when he penned the lyrics to a best selling song: “Eat, Drink and Be Merry.” That in essence is why people attend events; the search for a positive experience. People feel like a part of society when they attend large events. They feel as if they are a part of something greater, larger than themselves. This feeling is that which most people yearn for and live for; Belonging.

Events also offer guests and participants a one of kind experience, a “you should have been there” type of experience. The most successful special events create opportunities for guests to have special experiences shared with others.

In addition to looking for special experiences, many people attend special events as a business opportunity, to network; others attend as a social opportunity to see and to be seen. Many people hoping to land in the high social circles of New York City attend all the high profile benefits they can manage hoping to see their names in Page
Six. Page Six is the social/gossip section of the infamous New York Post. For someone’s name to appear means they have achieved a certain level of social standing. For a special event to appear means it is a social event worthy of press (or has invited the right celebrities who actually accepted) and guarantees millions of impressions in New York City and across the country.

Communication mediums are often described using a scale of cold, cool, warm, and hot. The more personal the medium, the “warmer” the medium is said to be. For example, a direct mail piece is not as warm as a personalized letter, which is still not as warm as a hand written note. Special events provide an opportunity for personal, live, face-to-face contact with an audience. This provides an opportunity to communicate directly and for many businesses that opportunity is priceless.

In order to understand why people attend events and how to make events successful you must understand the needs of the average person. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Need helps businesses understand people needs.

Photo courtesy of http://web.atk.edu/~gwynn/maslow.htm
Physiological needs are the very basic human needs such as air, water, food, sleep and sex. When these are not met, humans may feel sickness, irritation, pain or discomfort. These negative feelings motivate people to find a way to satisfy the needs as soon as possible in an attempt to survive. If and when these needs are met, one is able to think about other needs. This is why you would be hard pressed to ever attend an event where food and beverage are not served. Many people associate food with love; and event planners have been very successful capitalizing on that association.

Safety needs have to do with establishing stability and consistency in a chaotic world. These needs are the need for a home and a family. Safety needs are also thought to motivate religious feelings. If these needs are not met, for example, if a person’s home is an abusive dysfunctional home the next level of need, love and belonging cannot be attained.

The needs of love and belonging relate to the human desire to belong to and be accepted by others and groups. As mentioned above, humans are social beings and crave being loved (non-sexually) by others. This need can be realized through clubs, work groups, religious groups, gangs, family, friends, and others. Many organizations and corporations use language such as community and family at events to help foster the feeling of belonging. It is very common for speakers at large events to refer to the audience as “my friends.” Concerts promoters play off this emotion as well, creating an experience that makes the audience feel like being a fan of the performer makes them a part of a special club.
Esteem needs are broken down into two levels. The first is self-esteem and the second is the attention and recognition that comes from others. They are related and interconnected, but often function separately. For example, people who have all of their other needs met may feel the need to drive a flashy car or buy an obscenely large home because it raises their level of esteem and often elicits a response (i.e. attention from others). This need is extremely relevant to special events. Two examples follow.

1. Event organizers have long used awards and honors to recognize very successful or well know people. This is a very effective tactic, especially for fundraising events. Very often non-profits will honor, or give an award to, someone who has a large group of people who will feel compelled to attend the event on their behalf or who will appreciate being honored in front of a large group of his or her peers, family or friends. These award recipients often make large donations to the organizations that honor them.

2. Many human resource departments understand that employee recognition events are so successful because of this desire, this need to be recognized by others. Recognizing employees in front of their peers can increase productivity, worker satisfaction and breed loyalty.

The need for self-actualization has to do with the desire to fulfill one’s potential and be all that one is capable of being. People who have every other need fulfilled are
free to maximize their potential. These people often seek great knowledge, peace, oneness with God or other similar transcendental experiences; the type of experience most people are too busy working to seek or even dream of. Very often children born to extremely wealthy family explore this level of need.

Even though culture is commonly thought of in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, and citizenship those label are just the beginning. Corporations looking to win loyalty and market share must understand that they need to identify with customers on a deeper level and with a keen understanding of culture.

Cultures are defined by any one or any combination of the following culture categories:

1. **Objective Driven**: an example of an objective based culture is graduate students. The common bond between most graduate students is the objective of obtaining a master’s degree.

2. **Interest Based**: sharing an interest or hobby is also a basis for many cultures. There are cultures build around owning and riding Harley Davidson motorcycles or being a Philadelphia Eagles fan.

3. **Demographic**: this type of culture is defined by quantitative data such as age, race, income, and education.

4. **Belief Centered**: the best examples of belief centered cultures are religions and political parties.
5. **Regionality Founded**: nationality is a regionality founded culture because the culture is defined by a region or geography. For example, the Japanese culture is a regionality founded culture.

6. **Experience Based**: sharing an experience can also bring people together and is often the basis of a particular culture. Veterans are members of an experience based culture, as are support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous.

7. **Behavior Based**: Drug users, dieters, and regular exercisers are examples of behavior-based cultures. Members of behavior-based cultures have similar habits.

While these categories can define any number of cultures, it is important to keep in mind that there are countless sub-cultures within almost all cultures and the differences between the two can be just as important as the similarities. When considering a culture, or subculture, the following aspects of each should be kept in mind: traditions, norms, rituals, rites, parlance, values, sub-culture, history, points of pride, icons and anti heroes, self-identity, external perceptions and stereotypes, common concerns, origin, credo, conflict with mainstream, confidence factor, and confluence.

**Homework Week 1:**

Briefly design an event that attempts to meet safety needs and design an event that attempts to meet esteem needs. Take a special event and identify the key audiences.
and what are the main needs, motivation, and demographics of this audience. What are 3 other special events that would appeal to this market?

**Homework Week 2:**

Research the proper way to address the following situations:

- What is the proper way to greet a dignitary from China?

- What are some types of foods you would want to avoid if you were expecting guests who were Muslim, Christian, or Hindu?

- What are two hand gestures that are used in America that have different meanings abroad?

- How might the event differ if you were expecting Pop music fans as opposed to Punk music fans? College football fans versus professional football fans.
3. Business of Events, Proving Return on Investment

"If you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it." William Hewlett

Reading Assignment:

Event Management Chapter 10

Lecture Notes:

Every industry and business within it has its own way of proving return on investment. For the purpose of simply understanding the concept and relating it to special events a simple equation is helpful.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Revenue/Gifts/Grants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Media Placements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk</td>
<td>Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity Cost</td>
<td>New Customer Generation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Time represents the number of employees dedicated to the event and the number of hours each employee spends on the project.
Resources represent any capital or possessions used in the planning or production of the event (money, computers, travel, etc.) Resources are most often calculated in dollars.

Opportunity cost is the cost of not doing the event. For example, if a company chooses not to go ahead with a proposed mobile marketing tour highlighting a new product, the opportunity cost can be viewed as the number of potentials impressions lost. It can also be viewed as losing any number of potential new customers multiplied by the average amount each customer would have spent over the life of the relationship.

Risk must always be included in the equation as well. Some questions to consider: Does the potential return outweigh the risk? How much risk can be legally insured against? What would the headline be if the worst risk was realized? How would we respond?

While some level of risk is inherent in gathering large groups of people together, most events have minimal risk. Some elements that raise the risk level are pyrotechnics, air shows, outdoor event venues, controversial speakers and alcohol.

Basically, ROI is the notion that in the end result must justify the means. Businesses are most often focused on dollars figures, and event ROI can often be demonstrated that way. However, it is imperative the special event professionals educate organization leadership to understand that a positive return can be more than just hard dollars. For example, media impression, influence, new customer generation
and increased customer loyalty are all positive examples of return that are not best expressed in dollars. Revenue, donations and grants are examples of event ROI that can be expressed in hard dollar figures.

**Homework:** Interview a special event professional and find out how they prove return on investment. What factors do they consider? What do you, the student feel is the most important aspect relevant to ROI?
4. Creating Strategic Events

"Whatever you do, do it with all your might." P.T. Barnum

Reading Assignment:

Jones, Tony, “Road Trip! Successful Mobile Marketing Requires More Than Just Setting the Wheels in Motion.” Event Solutions Magazine January 2004

Ersparmer, Maria, “Capture the Competitive Edge, Branding through Events.” Event Solutions Magazine, February 2004

Lecture Notes:

Creating a strategic event first begins with understanding the organization or corporation’s mission and goals. Secondly, the event’s goals must be determined. It is very important to differentiate between the organization’s mission and goals and the event’s mission and goals. After the goals of the event are determined the event specifics can be designed. It is essential that the event not dictate the goals. The need to achieve a desired result should be the driving force behind the design. For example, an organization’s goal may be to sell as many cell phones as possible. The organization desires to host an event to get as many people as possible to be introduced to the product. Therefore the event goal is to introduce the audience to the cell phone. At this point, event elements are chosen and designed. When beginning the process of planning an event the following ideas about strategic special event must be considered:
- Is the event designed to help meet specific organizational goals?
- Does the event have pre-determined goals?
- Will the event produce a positive ROI?

When creating a strategic event, planners must design opportunities to deliver the host's key messages. Careful thought must be given to the design of the event, so that key messages are delivered at an appropriate time, when guests are able to best receive it. This small point is very important because if a guest leaves without knowing what the message or point of the event was, the host missed the opportunity to deliver the message and to achieve their goals. The host may never have the direct opportunity again.

**Homework:**

Consider a company of your choosing, research the company's mission and goals (goals can be estimated or supposed). List three examples of potential strategic events. Describe the event goals and link the event goals back to the company mission and goal.
5. Event Marketing, Promotion and Branding
   (2 session lesson)

   "But it is of no advantage to advertise unless you intend to honestly fulfill the promises made in this manner." P.T. Barnum

Reading Assignment:

Event Marketing
Chapter 1

Event Management
Chapter 11

Lecture Notes:

Some traditional examples of promoting a special event include: invitations, print and broadcast advertising, direct mail, posters, billboards, press releases, media advisories, and photo opportunities. The tactics that deal directly with media placements will be examined more closely in the next lecture topic.

Before any promotional materials can be created, the marketing strategy must be designed. For example, all materials need to reflect the theme, tone, goal, and feel of the event. This is known as branding the environment. These elements will also be duplicated at the event site to create fluid, cohesive messages and environments.

Deciding how to market your event is very important. According to Kathy Rennie,

"An event is truly successful when it becomes what you have said it was to be." She
referenced an event she worked on that she termed “New Jersey’s Fall Social Event of the Season.” And with strategic planning, proper promotion, and careful media relations the event did indeed become New “Jersey’s Fall Social Event of the Season.”

According to Leonard H. Hoyle, Jr., “Regardless of the nature of the event, its success will depend on the recognition by the event marketer that the five Ps of marketing will play an essential role.” Below is a synopsis of Hoyle’s event marketing plan.

5 Ps of Event Marketing

a. Product
b. Price
c. Place
d. Public Relations
e. Positioning

1. **Product**: Knowing the product, the event, thoroughly is the most important aspect to successfully marketing an event. “Only when the product is clearly defined can decisions be made as to strategies to be used in attracting audiences through price, place, positioning and public relations (Figure 1-4, Event Marketing, Hoyle). The reason understanding your effort is so essential is that a fundraiser is drastically different in countless ways from a product launch, and a product launch has a very different feel than a revenue generating event such as a
concert; these differences must be reflected in the marketing plan. When
contemplating the product consider the following questions:

a. What is the history of the event?

b. What is the value of the product?

c. What makes the product unique?

When deciding on a marketing plan, a successful event planner will market the
history, the uniqueness, and the value.

2. Price: The price of a product is very important and there are numerous things
to consider when properly pricing the event. For example, is the host of the
event a non-profit or a for-profit organization? Also, research must be done to
best evaluate the proper pricing. What are competitors charging for similar
products? What is the current demand for the product? But what is most
important relevant to pricing is perceived value. Perceived value is what the
customer perceives the value of the product or event to be. Additionally, the cost
of doing business (i.e. total cost of goods and services, including labor and
marketing) and the financial demographics of the target audience must be
considered in pricing.

3. Place: Location, location, location! The location and setting of an event must be
taken into account very early in the planning stages and must be a key part of the
marketing strategy. For example, an event near the airport would market the
convenience and functionality of the location, while for an event staged at a
plush resort, the setting can be the main draw. The following is a list of questions
taken from Figure 1-2 of Hoyle's book *Event Marketing*, these questions should be the basis of a decision to book a location.

a. Proximity to the potential attendees and ease of travel
b. Availability of parking for a commuter audience
c. Ambiance and originality of the site
d. Logistical practicality of staging a particular event
e. Surrounding attractions/infrastructure for ancillary activities
f. Existence of related audiences and organizations
g. Degree to which the location fits the character of the event
h. Safety and security of the event attendees
i. Availability of public transportation
j. Availability of overflow space (sleeping and meeting rooms)
k. The exclusivity of the venue

4. **Public Relations**: Public relations will help the host of an event get the desired messages about the organization, its goal(s) and its product (event) out to as many of the key people as possible. Also, good public relations will increase the credibility of the organization and the product and therefore help to influence success. Many of the traditional public relations tactics include means to get free publicity in mass media outlets. In addition to media coverage, helping to crystallize the messages being delivered at and through an event is why public relations is key to an events success. It is also worth noting, that even events that are designed solely as public relations tactics, do in fact need public relations themselves.
5. **Positioning:** “Positioning is the strategy of determining, through intuition, research, and evaluation, those areas of consumer need that your event can fulfill,” states Hoyle. Positioning is the final step in a successful marketing plan. However, it does encompass some elements from the previous *Ps*. When positioning the events, keep the following key concepts in mind:

a. Location

b. Attention Span of Audience

c. Competitive Costs

d. Program

e. Keep Marketing Plans Simple

**Homework Week 1:**

Create an event and run it through the *5 Ps of event marketing.*

**Homework Week 2:**

Describe 5 different ways you would promote the special event created in the previous week’s assignment. Explain why each tactic will work, and explain who the promotion is marketed toward.
6. Media Relations & Public Relations

"I am indebted to the press of the United Stated for almost every dollar which I possess and for every success as an amusement manager which I have ever received." P.T. Barnum

Reading Assignment:

Event Marketing
Chapter 2

Event Management
Chapter 13

New York Times Sunday Style & Metro Sections

PR Week

Lecture Notes:

According to Kathy Rennie, special events often give the impetus for many other public relations tactics. For example, having an event to invite a reporter to gives you a reason to call, a purpose to the conversation. Events can serve as the “what” (as in who, what, where, when and why) of a press release, media advisory, or pitch letter. Events present the opportunity to create news.

In order for an event to attract attention from the media, it must be newsworthy. While every news outlet determines individually what is newsworthy enough to make the cut, there are some ways to make an event more attractive to the media. Are any celebrities slated to be present at the event? Is there anything new or unprecedented happening or being launched at the event? Does the event relate directly to a current
event or hot news topic? Will you offer an exclusive to one media outlet? Is the event raising money for a worthy cause? Will the event provide a good picture? Will the event provide a good sound bite? If you can answer any of these questions you will have a better idea of the chance that your event will receive media attention.

In addition, the promotional materials geared at your target audience, a concerted effort must be made to inform the press of your event. This includes the standards of the release and the media advisory and pitching. Careful thought must be given to how you position the event and how you sell it to the media. Decide your angle before you pitch, it will make for a stronger sell.

Homework:

Find 3 examples of media coverage of events (print, electronic, and broadcast).

Explain why each event attracted media attention.
7. Event Management, Logistics, and Budget Management
(2 session lesson)

"The secret of joy in work is contained in one word - excellence. To know how to do
something well is to enjoy it." Pearl S. Buck

Reading Assignment:

Week 1: Event Management
   Chapter 4, 6, 7

Week 2: Event Management 9
   Review Event Management Chapter 10

Lecture Notes:

According to Judy Allen, author of Event Planning, "Designing and producing an
event- whether it be a meeting, corporate event, fundraising gala, conference,
convention, incentive or other special event- has been compared to directing a
movie, but is more like a live stage production. It is a high-wire act without the safety
nets. Once your event starts there are no second chances. It's done in one take and
there are no dress rehearsals. You can't yell "cut" and re-shoot the scene. You are
simply not able to predict the outcomes as you can from a movie script- of how your
guests and suppliers will interact and react. But you can plan, prepare and then be
prepared for the unexpected. Never forget Murphy's Law: what can go wrong, will
go wrong."
Below is a listing of various logistical categories relating to special events management. This list is certainly not intended to be an exhaustive list.

Audio Visual Needs          Lighting
Catering                    Décor
Transportation              Security
Accommodations              Permits
Parking                     Entertainment
Guest Restrictions/Needs    V.I.P Arrangements
Venue/Location Selections   Presentation Needs
Room Set-up/Design          Publications/Publicity
Staffing/Volunteers         Production
Seating Arrangements        Event Program/Timeline
Photography                 Speech/Remark Writing

Budget management and event logistics go hand in hand because each logistical element usually has a budget line. Each of the topics above is a category and may have multiple items underneath in a normal event plan and budget plan. It is imperative for special event planners to always be aware of all expenses. Examples of expenses often left off the initial budget plan, but add up after the event include gratuities (bell hops, parking attendants, wait staff, couriers, bartenders etc.), employee expenses (gas, tolls, parking etc.), special requests from guests (additional photographs, additional premiums, etc.), and postage (overnight delivery for contracts, rush orders, returned invitations etc.).
Homework Week 1:

A super star performer (of your choosing) is doing a promotional concert in Radio City Music Hall for Pepsi, who is launching a new product line. Create a list of as many logistical elements as you can. What are the risks associated with this event?

Homework Week 2:

Create a sample revenue and expense sheet for the event created in the previous week's assignment.
8. Fundraising & Sponsorships

“No one was ever ruined by taking a profit.” Stock Exchange Proverb

Reading Assignment:
Event Management
Chapter 9

Lecture Notes:
Special events are a very large part of the non-profit and fundraising industry. Primarily, there are two main types of events that are designed to help meet fundraising goals for organizations: cultivation events and revenue generating fundraisers. Cultivation events are used by organizations hoping to build a long-term relationship with a donor or potential donor. Cultivation events are designed to engage key people. Revenue generating fundraisers, like a walk-a-thon, silent auction, or black tie dinner, are designed to raise money on the actual night of the event, where cultivation events prove return when donors or potential donors give the organization a gift. The gift should be considerably more in value than the total spend on the donor in all cultivation events attended. The key to cultivation events being strategic is to ensure that the right people are in the audience, the people who will someday be able to help you prove return on investment.

Revenue generating fundraisers, however, can prove their financial return very shortly after the event. Although ticket prices help to off-set expenses and do contribute to the bottom line, most special event fundraisers generate the most
revenue through sponsorships, ad journals, committees, honorees, and secondary revenue sources such as silent auctions and high-end raffles.

Sponsorships are a key element to the success of many special events. A sponsorship is when a fee or donation is made to an event to exploit the commercial opportunities available at the event. There are numerous reasons corporations sponsor events, including the marketing and advertising opportunities, public relations opportunities, such as generating good will and fostering community involvement. Non-profit event planners are wise to court such sponsorships as they help to offset costs and can often provide goods or services that would otherwise not be attainable for the specific event.

Homework:

Find 5 examples of event sponsorships and explain why the sponsor picked the event and explain how the sponsor should take advantage of opportunity.
9. Legal Issues, Etiquette and Protocol

"It is impossible for a man to learn what he thinks he already knows." Epictetus

Reading Assignment:


Lecture Notes:

There are two areas that often get event managers into legal trouble. First, by not reading the small print on contracts and riders and secondly, by not following municipal codes such as obtaining the current building, fire or alcohol permits; or not meeting the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, including wheelchair accessibility and other accommodations. Basically, this lesson can be boiled down to an old saying, “good manners are a gift we give to each other.” Providing accommodations for disabled persons and maintaining proper etiquette standards are just a variation on the theme of good manners.

Organizations are banking on the fact that you will enjoy your experience at the special event, so it is imperative that special event planners not let details offend their guests. It may seem old fashion, but addressing invitations properly, introducing guest in proper order, and seating guests at tables in proper places are items that often go unnoticed when done correctly, but they draw attention when are forgotten or mismanaged. Always refer to an etiquette guide if you are unsure of what to do. Protocol refers to organization or corporation specific ways of doing something. For
example, in higher education, there is much protocol to be aware of including, protocol for academic regalia and listing of degrees and class years. Protocol and etiquette are just another way of showing your guests respect.

While many regulations are federal, many are local and vary state to state and city to city. To be safe, always reach out to local government to ensure all local regulations are met. If high profile guests, such as high-level government official who may require additional security or a famous celebrity who may attract thousand of autograph seekers, attend the event; local law enforcement should be notified. Special traffic and parking arrangements may be necessary.

**Homework:**

Draft a contract and a brief essay on ADA requirements, get building and alcohol permits from a local municipality, and construct a potential seating arrangement for a table consisting of the following people (assume the table is round): The president of hospital and his wife, The chief of staff and his wife, the doctor responsible for the achievement being honored that evening, the nurse who is also being that evening for her work on the achievement and her husband, one of the hospital’s most generous donors and his wife, and a representative from the event’s corporate sponsor.
10. Final Project & Presentation

Develop a comprehensive event proposal. Proposal must include the following items:

- Corporation/Organization History, Mission, Goal
- Target Audience(s)
- Pre-determined Event Goals
- Event Design
- Event Marketing and Promotional Strategies
- Public Relations Tactics and Media Lists
- Budget Information
- Logistical Challenges
- Planning Timelines
- Potential Corporate Sponsorships (if applicable)
- Risk Factors
- Wow Effects
- Means for Evaluating Success
Curriculum Summary

This special events curriculum demonstrates that special events are a strategic public relations, marketing and communications tactic. Each of the course topics could, in essence, be a topic for an entire course. Each of the above lecture notes essays are simply brief introductions on the particular topics. Any person using this study as a basis for instructing a similar course should use these notes as an outline, not as the entire class lecture. Each topic should be addressed in appropriate detail as determined by the individual instructor and as desired by the class participants.

The author maintains that the homework listed is an integral part of the curriculum. It serves as the link between the classroom and the real professional world of special events- as mandated by this study's initial question: "What are the essential elements of a graduate strategic events curriculum that incorporates academic theory with real world business practices?" Talking about special events in a classroom and actually having to manage an event and prove return is another, proper training and education can bridge that gap. The author envisions this course being taught in the context of a graduate program designed for professionals such, as the Corporate and Public Communications program at Seton Hall University.
Chapter 5

Summary Perspective

"Knowledge is a process of piling up facts; wisdom lies in their simplification." Martin Fischer

Points of Emphasis

While there are several keys concepts the author believes are essential to understanding the role of special events in the public relations and marketing mix, there are a few main points the author hopes every reader takes special note of.

Special events are wonderful tool because they play into the needs and emotions of every person- most specifically the desire to be social, to be part of something and the desire to have positive, unique experiences shared with others. Understand the power of experience. Know that emotions drive sales. A truly “special” event can sell an experience, which lets the product sells itself.

The author cannot overstate the importance of return on investment and goal setting in regards to special events. That being stated, it is also imperative to understand that return can be determined differently at each organization and for each event. ROI can be measured in several ways, dollars in just one of the ways. Furthermore, organizational leadership must be consulted when standards for return are established. It is also essential that events are assigned goals, and that success is determined from the completion of those goals. Additionally, be sure to convey to the leadership of the organization what are reasonable and realistic event goals.
Organizations that plan events and do not utilize public relations and marketing tactics are missing an opportunity to be successful. Any time an organization gathers a group of people together, there is an opportunity to create and enhance the relationship with the organization, the brand or the product. Ultimately, public relations and marketing strategies should be incorporated into all business decisions and that includes the planning and execution of special events.

In Brief: Original Questions Answered

While the author hopes that the preceding chapter answered the questions set forth in the first chapter, in an effort to come full circle, brief answers to each of the original questions follow.

1. What are the essential elements of a graduate strategic events curriculum that incorporate academic theory with real world business practices?

   According to the results of the original survey, over 50 seasoned public relations professionals believe the essential elements of a strategic events course are event marketing and promotion, media relations, budget management, cultural considerations, market research and return on investment.

2. How can an event garner media attention?

   Events that most often generate media attention are newsworthy and relevant to current events or offer a unique photo opportunity or sound bite.
3. How can an event generate revenue? Events can be an excellent source of revenue. It is very important to keep secondary revenue streams in mind. Secondary revenue streams can be (primary might be ticket price) sponsorships, product sales, licensing, and concessions.

4. How can an event generate donations/gifts? The two most common types of events used by non-profit organization to raise money are cultivation or stewardship events and special event fundraisers.

5. How can an event improve the image and reputation of an organization? Events are an excellent tool to help improve the image of an organization. A simple way to increase the chance of improving your image with event guests is to remember, recognize and respect the importance of cultural considerations and etiquette.

6. How can an event be used to deliver key organizational messages?

Organizational messages can be delivered through the event's print publications; invitations, advertisements, programs, posters etc., and can also be delivered most effectively though spoken, scripted remarks.

7. How can an event increase customer/employee loyalty?

Events that are designed with the target audience in mind are more likely to increase loyalty. Customers and other key audiences recognize when organizations take the time to make their product, messages, and experience speak to them personally.
8. Would a strategic events course help prepare future communications professionals to better understand how events can help achieve organizational goals?

According to the survey discussed previously, yes; a strategic event course would be beneficial.

9. Are special events a crucial part of a strategic public relations, marketing or communications plan?

Yes, the results of the survey supported this hypothesis.

10. Are events only considered successful if predetermined goals have been met or exceeded?

Yes, every viable business venture must set a means to be measured and predetermined goals are the best way to do that.

11. Is the potential impact of events is successfully realized at most American corporations and organizations?

No, there is always room for improvement, especially as the discipline of special events continues to evolve.

12. Must events prove a return on investment in order to be viewed as viable public relations, marketing or communications tactic?

Yes, the author believes, and is supported by the research presented, that an event that does not provide the organization a return on their investment is simply a “party.”
The Author's Final Thoughts

Throughout the process of researching and writing this paper, the author attempted to keep one very important thought in mind; the desire to bring credibility to the special event profession is an almost universal concern to professionals in the industry. Leonord H. Hoyle, Jr., author of Event Marketing, recounts a familiar story in the preface to his book. He discusses the first time someone told him, "Boy, I'd love to throw parties for a living!" Almost all special event professionals have a very similar story to tell. If nothing else, the author hopes that this project will help to dismiss the notion that special event professionals just "plan parties."

On a personal note, the author now truly knows that there is nothing more worthy of in-depth research than a topic one truly finds joy in. And the research proves it: special events are an art, not a science; a perfect and unique mixture of art and business.
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Appendix A

Strategic Special Events Survey
SURVEY

This survey is a vital part of the research being conducted for a thesis project. Successful completion of the thesis project is necessary to receive a Master of Arts in Corporate and Public Communication. The purpose of this research is to determine the essential components for a graduate level strategic events curriculum.

All survey responses will be kept confidential. It is not necessary to identify yourself in any way.

Thank you for your participation. It is greatly appreciated.

NOTE:
The author defines a strategic event as any special event designed to help achieve an organization achieve a specific goal or objective.
Part I: Survey Questions
Please review the scale below carefully before beginning the survey. Please circle the answer that most closely represents your opinion.

SA  Strongly Agree     A  Agree     N  Neutral     D  Disagree     SD  Strongly Disagree

1. In general, a strategic events course would help prepare future communications professionals to better understand how events can help achieve organizational goals.

   SA  A  N  D  SD

2. Special events are a crucial part of a strategic public relations, marketing or communications plan.

   SA  A  N  D  SD

3. For the most part, events are only successful if predetermined goals have been met and/or exceeded.

   SA  A  N  D  SD

4. The impact and potential of events is successfully realized at most American corporations and organizations

   SA  A  N  D  SD

5. Generally, events must prove a return on investment in order to be viewed as viable public relations, marketing or communications tactic.

   SA  A  N  D  SD

Part II: Course Curriculum

Using the scale indicated below, please rate all of the items listed on the their relevance in a strategic events course

5 - Very Important
4 - Important
3 - Relatively Important
2 - Not important
1 - Not Needed at All

_____ Legal Issues
_____ Publicity/Media Relations Strategies
_____ Event Marketing Strategies
Please list any other topics you feel need to be addressed in a strategic events course.

Part III  Optional Questions

1. Name:

2. Title:

3. Employer:

4. Age:

5. Gender:

6. Have you ever had any formal public relations or marketing training? If yes, please explain.

7. Would you be interested in taking a strategic events course?
Appendix B

Strategic Special Events Course Sample Syllabus
University Name & Program
Semester/Year

Strategic Special Events

Course Syllabus

Professor Name
Professor Home Phone
Professor Office Home
Professor Email

Course Overview

This course is designed for communication majors who are looking to enhance their knowledge of how strategic special events can help achieve organizational goals, to learn key strategies for designing effective events and to understand how special events fit into public relations, marketing and communications campaigns. The course also discusses how sound business practices and event management knowledge can increase success and decrease risk.

Course Grading

20% Attendance and class participation
30% Homework assignments
40% Final Project
10% Final Presentation

Required Texts


Suggested Texts/Subscriptions

1. Event Solutions Magazine

2. The Sunday New York Times
3. PR Week Magazine

Topic, Readings & Homework assignments

Week 1

Topic: Industry Introduction
Reading: Event Management Chapters 1, 2, 3
Homework: Bring in a media clip, invitation, advertisement or other event related promotion piece. Write a brief description of the best special event you have attended

Week 2

Topic: Sociology of Special Events & Understanding your Audience
Reading: Event Management Chapter 12
Homework: Briefly design an event that attempts to meet safety needs. Briefly design an event that attempts to meet esteem needs. Take a special event and identify the key audiences and what are the main needs, motivation, and demographics of this audience. What are 3 other special events that would appeal to this market?

Week 3

Topic: Sociology of Special Event & Understanding your Audience
Homework: Research the proper way to address the following situations
  - What is the proper way to greet a dignitary from China?
  - What are some types of foods you would want to avoid if you were expecting guests who were Muslim? Christian? Hindu?
  - What are 2 hand gestures that are used in America that have different meanings abroad?
  - How might the event differ if you were expecting Pop music fans as opposed to Punk music fans? College Football fans v. Professional Football fans
Week 4

Topic: Business of Events, Proving Return on Investment
Reading: Event Management Chapter 10
Homework: Interview a special event professional and find out how they prove return on investment. What factors do they consider?

Week 5

Topic: Creating Strategic Special Events
Reading: Event Solutions Magazine Articles: “Road Trip! Successful Mobile Marketing Requires More Than Just Setting the Wheels in Motion” and “Capture the Competitive Edge, Branding through Events.”
Homework: Consider a company of your choosing, research the company’s mission and goals (goals can be estimated or supposed). List 3 examples of potential strategic events. Describe the event goals and link the event goals back to the company mission and goal.

Week 6

Topic: Event Marketing, Promotion and Branding through Special Events
Reading: Event Marketing Chapters 1
Homework: Create an event and run it through the 5 Ps of event marketing.

Week 7

Topic: Event Marketing, Promotion and Branding through Special Events
Reading: Event Management Chapter 11
Homework: Describe 5 different ways you would promote the special event created in the previous week’s assignment. Explain why each tactic will work, and explain who the promotion is marketed toward.
Week 8

Topic: Review course content: weeks 1 - 7

Week 9

Topic: Media Relations and Public Relations
Reading: Event Management Chapter 13
          Event Marketing Chapter 2
Homework: Find 3 examples of media coverage of events (print, broadcast and
electronic). Explain why each event attracted media attention.

Week 10

Topic: Event Management, Logistics, and Budget Management
Reading: Event Management Chapters 4, 6, 7
Homework: A super star performer (of your choosing) is doing a promotional concert in
          Radio City Music Hall for Pepsi who is launching a new product line. Create
          a list of as many logistical elements as you can. What are the risks associated
          with this event?

Week 11

Topic: Event Management Logistics, and Budget Management
Reading: Event Management Chapter 9
          Review Chapter 10
Homework: Create a sample revenue and expense sheet for the event created in the
          previous week's assignment.

Week 12

Topic: Fundraising and Sponsorships
Reading: Review Event Management Chapter 9
Homework: Find 5 examples of event sponsorships and explain why each sponsor chose
          the event and explain how and why they should take advantage of the
          opportunity.
Week 13

Topic: Legal Issues, Ethics, Etiquette and Protocol
Homework: Complete the following tasks
  - Draft a contract for a musical group performing at your event
  - Write a brief essay on ADA requirements
  - Get a building and/or alcohol permit from your local municipality

Week 14

Topic: Review course content: weeks 9 – 12.
  - Preparing a Proposal
Homework: Final Project

Week 15

Topic: Final Presentation